00031683

SHRINE OF ST. PATRICK'S BELL.
Made for Donal O'Neill, Prince of Aileach and Ulster, and King of Ireland, A.D. 1083-1121.
Now in the Dublin Museum.
From *Early Christian Art in Ireland*, by Miss Stokes.
Frontispiece, Part I.

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THE O'NEILLS OF ULSTER

THEIR HISTORY AND GENEALOGY

BY

THOMAS MATHEWS

AUTHOR OF "AN ACCOUNT OF THE O'DEMPSEYS, CHIEFS OF CLAN MALIERE," "RECORDS OF THE KEATING FAMILY," ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS, SOME NOTICES OF THE NORTHERN SEPTS;

AND AN

INTRODUCTION

BY

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Dublin:

SEALY, BRYERS & WALKER

MIDDLE ABBEY STREET

1907

PRINTED BY
SEALY, BRYERS AND WALKER,
MIDDLE ABBEY STREET,
DUBLIN.

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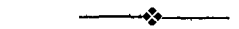
INTRODUCTION.



IT was the English Viceroy, Mountjoy, who wrote: "For we held it a very good policy to make the Irish cut one another's throats, without which the Kingdom will never be quiet." And it was the steady, persistent application of this policy that culminated in the "flight of the earls" in 1607, and the downfall of the O'Neill dynasty in their ancient Kingdom of *Uladh*. True, in the wars of 1641 *Eoghan Ruadh* shot like a meteor across the stormy political horizon, raising high hopes with the routing of the invader at Benburb, when the *Aibhin dubh* ran red with the blood of his enemies. At midnight the captured standards and tattered banners of the foe were ranged in triumph along the rude walls of Brantry Friary, where his Franciscan friends had taken refuge after being driven from their ancient cloisters in *Ard macha*, founded by the ancestors of the victor centuries before. Driven by their enemies and O'Neill's foes, the enemies and foes of everything appertaining to the Irish people. So had *Seaghan* found it, so had *Aodh*. Gallantly and valiantly had they struggled—let their deeds be

remembered to them, for they were worthy of the best blood in Ireland, the blood that coursed through their own veins.

It is difficult to record in any book of moderate proportions even a tithe of the events of such a people as the O'Neills. It can only be done in a concise and very restricted way, yet it is well to have it done that our people may know not only from whence they came, but, from the lessons of the past, ascertain whither they are going. In these later days, when the sea-divided Gael are beginning to knit together, when men like O'Neill of Lisbon, whose ancestors were driven into exile, acreless and penniless, from their own land, are found as deeply interested in every phase of Irish life—the old tongue, the ancient lore, and present-day prospects—as the keenest Irishman who never left his natal sod—men who have won honour, distinction, wealth, and high renown in every country of the earth save their own, from whose shores they were banned by every iniquitous force that ever occurred to the mind of man. When such Irishmen the world over are now thinking and working for Ireland, it behoves those at home to be on their mettle in every way, to have their house in order, so when the good time comes—and come it must—each corner will be found swept and clean, and the rooms garnished with good things. Then the harps will be taken from the walls, and there will be music and

dancing in the land as of yore. The tears will be wiped from the face of the Niobe of the nations, and she will stand erect amongst her sisters, free and unshackled, mistress in her own house, and no bondswoman. Time will smooth the gyve marks from her wrists, and the blood-stains from her garments will be washed away.

The O'Neills were a lordly and noble race; the very choice of residence would prove this. No one can stand by royal *Ailech*, and look around, and then doubt it—to the west *Tir conail*, with its glimmering lakes and soaring mountains; to the north the wave-washed heights of *Inis-eoghan*. *Suible*, in shadow, wanders far inland, past Rathmullen, up to *Cill o Domnail*. On the other hand, away to the east, rise the bold cliffs of Magilligan in O'Cathan's country, with *Doire Columbcill* nestling in woods on the shores of Foyle. Truly a great site, telling of high hopes and mighty possibilities, fit resting-place for the O'Neills in the days of their early glory. And now armed forces are slumbering beneath the fading walls of *Ailech*—O'Neill's mailed warriors are enchained in slumber, ready, their belts girded, "with their bridles and broadswords in hand," awaiting the time when they shall rush forth, a mighty army, to right the wrongs of royal *Uladh*.

Seaghan an diomas towers high in the history of Eire. His name and fame have never been treated justly. State papers have been read as if they were

Holy Writ. Now we know and feel that then, as now, politicians lied deliberately and for a purpose, and none ever excelled in duplicity and fraud those of queen Elizabeth. They bear away the palm for double-dealing and falsehood. Men like viceroy Sussex, who even offered his sister as a bait to *Seaghan*, could be guilty of any act, seeing it was illegal in the queen's grants that any Englishry "should marry any of Irish birth." Neal Grey was bribed by Sussex to assassinate *Seaghan*, who cantingly in his letter to the queen dealing with this incident, ends—"God send your highness a good end." *Seaghan* had ruled his people in such a way that 200 of the English pale fled to live with "wild and savage people," as the records put it. "Inglyshmen had no right to Yrlande" is how *Somhairle buidhe MacDomnail's* words were Anglicised. *Seaghan an diomas* went far to assert this principle after escaping Sussex's poisoned wine. Treaties were made with queen Elizabeth by *Seaghan*, but Cecil found them "not honourable to be confirmed as they are penned," and tried to persuade O'Neill "to forget the matter of poisoning." Lord Arnold wrote to Cecil that he was "with all the wild Irish as with bears and bandogs . . . I care not who have the worse." To which Cecil piously consented, advising Arnold not to consider the world, but "only what God sees . . . the bear and bandog policy from which I do not dissent being as an Englishman, but being

as a Christian man I cannot without some perplexity enjoy of such cruelties." Cecil got over his scruples easily, his descendant, lord Salisbury, had none. "The instinctive feeling of an Englishman is to wish to get rid of an Irishman," were his words. The "Christian" gave way to the "Englishman," as it has ever done where conquest was possible.

Seaghan's character will yet be full and fairly vindicated to the Irish people, and his every act explained to satisfaction, and a proud monument will yet be reared in the Antrim glens, where he was so foully done to death by hired assassins. *Aodh* had to face the same warfare as *Seaghan*, treacherous and underhand. The rich lands of *Tir Eoghan* were ever a tempting bait, and the English got them in the end, and their descendants are now being paid off like militiamen, their season over, and the land is as desolate as when *Aodh* sought refuge on the banks of the Tiber.

To read the fortunes of a falling race must of necessity be sad, as a whole, spite of the bright flashes of daring courage and long endurance against overwhelming odds and unscrupulous tactics. The place of pride has been well filled by many an O'Neill as well as *Eoghan Ruadh*, *Seaghan an diomas*, and *Aodh*. Their race is not yet extinct—their pride and spirit survives in many a glen of *Aon truim*, on many a hillside of *Tir Eoghan*, by many a lake and shore in *Inis Eoghan* and *Tir Conail*.

The pages of these volumes have been culled with care from many authorities. The work entailed great labour and wide judgment. It has been well done. The Irish people have now for all time a clear resumê ably written of the history of the greatest of the governing races Ireland has ever known.

FRANCIS JOSEPH BIGGER.

PART I.

THE

O'NEILL HIGH KINGS

AND

KINGS OF AILEACH AND ULSTER

To A.D. 1166.

ERRATA.

Page 2, *for* Braganza *read* Corunna.

—— 75, line 8, *for* deeds than in words *read* words than in deeds.

—— 86, *for* Ordinance *read* Ordnance.

—— 88, line 1, *for* interior *read* exterior.

—— —— 23, *for* may be seen *read* was to be seen.

—— 152, *for* Chap. XIII, *read* Chap. XII.

—— 174, line 1, *for* nephew, *read* cousin.

—— 270, *for* brother, *read* son.

—— 334, line 15, *for* grandson *read* son.

THE O'NEILLS OF ULSTER.

CHAPTER I.

FROM HEREMON TO NIALL OF THE NINE HOSTAGES.

THE history of the royal house of O'Neill may well be said to be the history of Ireland itself, seeing how many High-kings it gave to the throne up to the English invasion; and what an important part it subsequently played in the history of the country.

The old historians trace the pedigree of the O'Neills to a very remote period. Penetrating into the mists of time, as Sir Bernard Burke[1] observes, far beyond the period generally assigned for authentic history, they point out in the dim vista, the prince-schoolmaster, Nial of Scythia, fountain of the race.

Nial, we are assured, was the son of Fenius, the Antiquarian,(*a*) king of Scythia; and fifth in descent from Japhet; for like other men of old, his ancestors reckoned their ages in centuries. Having been invited into Egypt by Pharao Cingris,

[1] *Vicissitudes of Families.*

on account of his great learning, he was there given the land of Campus Cyrunt, near the Red Sea, to inhabit, and his daughter, Scota, in marriage.

Like Joseph, as Minister of Pharao, he ruled Egypt for many years; and introduced many and great improvements in "regulating the flow" of the great river, called from him the Nial, or Nile.

Nial, by the Princess Scota, who rescued the infant Moses from drowning, had a son Gaedhal, or Gael, who gave name to his descendants the Gaels, whose wanderings and adventures—given at length in *Keating's History*—would fill a fair-sized volume.

Driven from Egypt because they had taken part with Moses, they went to Crete, where they lived for a long time, thence back again to Scythia; and after wandering through Europe for many generations, they at length arrived in Galicia, in Spain, where Breogan, the seventeenth in descent from Nial, built the city of Brigantia, or Braganza, as the Bards say:—

"The brave Breogan chas'd the Spanish troops,
Followed by victory where'er he fought,
And rais'd the city of Brigantia."

Milesius, grandson of Breogan reigned in Galicia for thirty-six years; married another Princess Scota, daughter of Pharao Nectonibus, King of Egypt, and was father of Heber and Heremon,

under whom the Milesians, as a modern bard puts it :—

"Set sail in their good ships gallantly
From the sunny land of Spain.
'Oh, where's the Isle we've seen in dreams,
Our destin'd home or grave ?'
Thus sang they, as by the morning's beams
They swept the Atlantic wave."

At length they descried the island, its tall blue hills lit up by the last expiring rays of the setting sun, when "from the galleys there arose a shout of joy; Innisfail, the Isle of Destiny was found!"

Heber landed in Munster, and Heremon in Leinster. The former, on his way through Kerry, encountered and defeated a party of Tuatha De Danaans, at Slieve Mis, after a stiff battle, in which fell Queen Scota, relict of Milesius, for :—

"Mix'd with the first the fair virago fought,
Sustain'd the toil of arms, and danger sought."

In an adjoining glen called from her Glen Scothin, near Killarney, her grave is still shown, covered by a large white stone.

At Drogheda Heber joined Heremon, whence they marched to Tailtin, Co. Meath, to give battle to the De Danaan chiefs, whom they defeated and slew in a decisive engagement, after which they divided the island. Heremon took Leinster and

Connaught; Heber, Munster; and the sons of Ir, another brother, Ulster.

For one year Heremon and Heber reigned jointly, till Heremon refused to part with certain valleys in his territory, coveted by Heber's Queen, an ambitious lady:—

"By pride o'ercome she thirsted to enjoy,
And to be called Queen of the Three Vales,
The most delightful lands in all the isle.
She vow'd, and raging passionately swore
That she would never sleep on Irish ground,
Till she was mistress of those fruitful plains.
A battle follow'd on Geishall's fatal field,
Where Heber Fion fell, a sacrifice
To the ambition of a haughty wife."

After this battle, fought in Offaly, in the present King's County, Heremon became sole monarch, according to O'Flaherty's *Ogygia*, A.M. 2935, and B.C. 1015.

Heremon took up his residence in Leinster, and after a reign of thirteen years, died and was buried at Rath Beothaigh in Argot Ros,[1] which Rath, now known as Rath Beagh, still exists on the right bank of the river Nore, near the village of Ballyragget, Co. Kilkenny.

Tea, daughter of Lewy, son of Ith (and cousin of

[1] *Annals of the Four Masters.* The events in this chapter are chiefly taken from these Annals; Keating's *History of Ireland;* and O'Flaherty's *Ogygia.*

Milesius), Heremon's Queen whom he married in Spain to the repudiation of the lady Ova (Odbha), was buried, according to her own wish, in County Meath, on a hill, afterwards from her called Tea Mor, or Tea's Mound, now Tara. Here in after times the High-kings of Ireland had their principal seat.

Eithrial, son of Irial Faidh, or the Prophet, and grandson of Heremon, was a worthy descendant of the great Nial; for he is said to have written with his own royal hand a history of the travels and adventures of his ancestors. He fell by the hand of Conmael, son of Heber Fionn, in the battle of Sorrain in Leinster.

Tighernmas, grandson of Eithrial, succeeded Conmael, who fell at Emania, now the Navan Fort near Armagh.

Tighernmas, in whose reign the first gold mine in Ireland was discovered in County Wicklow, enacted a law regulating the wearing of colours, so that the quality of every person throughout the island should be known by the colour of his garb.

The plebeians and soldiers should have one colour; military officers of inferior rank two; Commanders of battalions, three; keepers of houses of hospitality, four (*b*); noblemen and military knights five; and six for the Bards and Ollaves or learned men, being but one colour less than that worn by the King and Queen and royal family. From the

parti-coloured garments worn by the ancient Irish is derived the national fashion of the plaid, still prevailing among their descendants in Scotland.

Tighernmas is said to have been the first to introduce idolatry and to erect pagan altars about 100 years after the Milesians arrived in Ireland; and, according to Keating, he was struck down, with the greater part of his subjects, while worshipping his idol Crom Cruadh—said to have been a stone capped with gold about which stood twelve lesser stones or deities—in Magh Sleacht, *i.e.*, the Plain of Adoration, in County Cavan, B.C. 916.

From this period there is little of interest to record of the succeeding Hy-Nial Kings—with the exception of Ugony More (*c*)—until we come to the reign of Feradach Fin Feachtna, or the Just, whose descent from Tighernmas and Heremon is given at the end of this Chapter.

Feredac's father, Criffan, according to the *Leabhar Gabhla*, or *Book of Invasions*, was slain with many other princes and nobles at a great feast given in their honour—at Magh Cro, near Knockma, Co. Galway—by the vassal tribes or Attacotti, who elevated their leader, Carbery, surnamed Cin Cait, or Cat's Head, to the throne, A.D. 90. Carbery died after a reign of five years, during which time the country was a prey to every misfortune: "fruitless the corn, for there used to be but one grain on the stalk; fishless her rivers, and

milkless her cattle." [1] After Carbery's death the throne was offered to his son Moran, "a truly intelligent and learned man," who wisely declined the honour, as he said it was not his hereditary right; and, moreover, he said, the scarcity and famine would continue until they should elect Feredach as King, for to him it was due, because his father had been killed in the massacre. This was done at Moran's suggestion; and it was to invite Feredach to be elected King that Moran sent the celebrated Udhacht or Testament.[2]

Feredach accepted the invitation, and returning from exile was inaugurated at Tara, A.D. 95. Moran he appointed his Chief Brehon (*d*), or Judge, and Councillor; and under their joint sway the country enjoyed peace and prosperity. "The seasons were right tranquil; the earth brought forth its fruit; fishful its river mouths; milkful the kine; heavy-headed the woods.[3]

To the fame acquired by Moran for his upright decrees, is attributed the fable of the Sin, or Chain called Idh Moran, (*e*) which, when put round the neck of a guily person would squeeze him to suffocation; but when placed about the neck of an innocent person would expand and fall to the ground.

Feredach, who, by his good government, earned for himself the title of the Just, died peaceably at Tara after a reign of twenty-one years, A.D. 116;

[1] *Four Masters.* [2] *Leabhar Gabhla.* [3] *Four Masters.*

and was succeeded by Fatach Finn, progenitor of the Dal Fatach, whose Chief in the 12th century adopted the surname of MacDunlevy, from Dunlevy a lineal descendant of Fatach.

In A.D. 119 Fiacha Fin-Ola or, Of the White Oxen, son of Feredach, succeeded to the throne on the death of Fatach.

Shortly after his accession the provincial kings, following the example of the Attacotti, formed a conspiracy to dethrone him; and, about the year 126, his forces being then absent in North Britain contending against the Roman Legions,[1] they marched to Tara and slew him in the palace; after which Elim, son of Conra, King of Ulster, was raised to the throne.

Fiacha's son, Tuathal or Tool (surnamed Teachtmar, *i.e.* the Acceptable or Legitimate) by his wife Ethne, daughter of Imgheal, King of the Picts,[2] being obliged to seek refuge with his mother's people in Scotland, soon afterwards returned at the head of a large body of foreign troops; and being joined by many of his supporters on landing in Ireland, he advanced to Tara where he was received by a majority of the noblemen of the island, and proclaimed king, A.D. 130. At the battle of Achill, now the Hill of Skreen, Co. Meath, he defeated and

[1] *The O'Conors of Connaught* by John O'Donovan and The O'Conor Don.

[2] *Ogygia*; Keating's *History*.

slew the usurper Elim; and marching into Leinster, encountered Eochy Ainchean, King of that Province, whom he defeated and killed at the battle of Ocha; soon afterwards, Forbry, King of Munster, was despatched at the battle of Femin; and Sanbh, King of Connaught at Magh Ai.

Having thus routed his enemies, and established himself firmly on the throne, he convened the Feis or Parliament of Tara, where he obliged the nobility and gentry of the island to swear (the old pagan oath, in imitation of his ancestor Ugaine), by the sun, moon, and stars, and all the elements visible and invisible, that they would never contest the sovereignty with him or his. These are the sureties which Tuathal took:

"Heaven, earth, sun, pure moon,
Sea, fruitful land,
Feet, hands, mouths with tongues,
Ears, eyes,
Horses, javelins, shields, valiant swords,
With their hardness,
Countenances of men, dew, with colours,
Strand with flood,
Corn, milk, fruit, each good likewise
Which man doth,
These sureities all were given
According to law,
To Tuathal's children, to his race
And to his tribe.[1]

[1] Petrie: *History and Antiquities of Tara Hill* in the Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy.

He further stipulated that if the sovereignty of Ireland should be contested with his descendants in violation of these oaths, his progeny should still have possession of Tara with its old tribes, and Meath perpetually. And should any of the race of Ugony or Tuathal ever consent to resign the sovereignty to any other person, the latter could not, nevertheless, come to reside at Tara unless he had given lands equally as valuable as Tara to the descendants of Ugony and Tuathal, while he should be king over them; and when the said king died Tara should revert to the race of Ugaine and Tuathal.[1]

Tuathal thus secured to his descendants—the Hy Nials—the province of Meath, (now East and Westmeath, with parts of the adjoining counties), which he formed from the four existing provinces at the points where they met. In each portion he erected palace-forts, which are well known at the present day.

In that taken from Munster he built the royal seat of Tlachtga, now the Hill of Ward near Athboy, Co. Meath, where the sacred fire was ordained to be kindled to summon the Druids, to consume the sacrifices offered to the pagan gods on the eve of All Saints. The remains of the royal rath, consisting of three circumvallations, are still to be seen on the Hill.

[1] *Battle of Magh Rath*, edited by O'Donovan.

Uisneach, now the Hill of Ushnagh, near Ballymore, Co. Westmeath, where the second royal seat was erected, belonged to Connaught; and here all the inhabitants of the island assembled annually on the first of May (La Beltinne), and sacrifices were offered up to Bel the principal deity of the island. During this time it was the custom all through Ireland to light fires through which cattle were driven as a preservative against disease for the coming year.

Tailtin, now Teltown, Co. Meath, where the third seat was erected, belonged to Ulster; and here was held the great fair of Tailtin, fifteen days before the first of August, and fifteen days after, in honour of the sun god Lug. At this Fair the princes and noblemen, bards and scholars, of the kingdom, attended. Horse races, reputed to have been invented by Lug, and chariot races; and literary as well as athletic contests of various kinds were held, and cooking, and feasting abounded. Marriages were contracted, and full protection for the time being was conferred upon the persons and property of those attending. After the introduction of Christianity this Fair was celebrated occasionally up to the 12th century. (*f*)

The remains of the Rath, or fortress, are still visible; and to the left of the road as you go from Kells to Donaghpatrick, is a hollow called Lag an Aonach, or the Hollow of the Fair, where, according

to tradition, marriages were solemnised in pagan times.

That portion of territory taken from Leinster included the city and palace of Tara, the chief seat of the High-kings from pre-historic times; and the capital of all Ireland up to the 6th century.

After thirteen centuries of ruin, the chief monuments for which the hill was remarkable are distinctly to be traced. They consist for the most part of circular, or oval enclosures, or mounds, within, or upon which, the habitations of the ancient city undoubtedly stood.

The Rath called Rath Righ, or Fortress of the Kings, appears anciently to have been the most important work upon the hill; and was evidently composed in part of stone, but it is now nearly levelled with the ground. It occupied the summit and southern slope of the hill, and measured in length, from north to south, about 850 feet.

Within this was the *Forradh*, or Judgment Hall; and the *Tech Cormac* or House of King Cormac M'Art. Also the fortress where the hostages were kept, the site of which is now occupied by the mound called *Duma na nGiall*, or Mound of the Hostages.

Of the Rath Righ and Forradh, an old Norse writer quoted by Dr. Joyce (*Social History of Ireland*) says: "in what was considered the highest part of the city, the king had a fair well-built

Castle, and in that Castle he had a hall, fair and spacious, and in that hall he was wont to sit in judgment."

The Rath-na-Seanaid or Rath of the Synods, said to be so called from Synods having been held there—one by St. Patrick when he preached to King Leary; and others by St. Adamnan, St. Brendan, and St. Ruadhan—has been partly encroached upon by the modern church. The two ramparts that surround it are still well marked features.

On the northern slope of the hill stood the Tech Midchuarta, or Great Banqueting-Hall, in which was held the Feis Teamor or triennal assembly of peers, druids, and commoners, for the purpose of passing such laws and regulations as the public good seemed to require:

"The King was seated on a royal throne,
And in his face majestic greatness shone,
A monarch for heroic deeds designed;
For noble deeds, become a noble mind,
About him, summoned by his strict command,
The peers, the priests, and commons of the land,
In princely state and solemn order stand." [1]

In the presence of this assembly too, the different records of the kingdom were examined, and whatever materials for a national history the provincial annals supplied, were sifted and epitomised, and

[1] Keating's *History*. The description of Tara given above is chiefly taken from Dr. Joyce's *Social History of Ireland*; and Wakeman's *Handbook of Irish Antiquities*.

entered in the great national Register called the Saltair of Tara.

This practise of chronicling events continued to be observed up to a late period, not only at the courts of the different kings, but even in the family of every inferior chieftain, a Seanachie, or Historian formed always a regular part of the domestic establishment.

In the Banqueting-Hall the members of the Feis, before entering on public business, were entertained by the King to a magnificent feast. Of the ceremonies observed on the occasion Keating gives a detailed account.

At the first sound of the trumpet, the shield bearers of the princes and chiefs delivered their shields to the grand marshal, who, by direction of the king of arms, hung them up on the wall opposite the places assigned to their owners at the right side of the table. The second blast summoned the target bearers of the commanders of the army to deliver up their shields, which were hung up in order on the left side. At the third blast, the guests took their seats under their own shields, which were distinguished by their different devices.

That the songs of the bards, descriptive of these royal feasts, are not the fictions that many people are very ready to suppose they are, may be inferred from the description of the ruins, which consist of two parallel lines of earth, (760 feet long by 90 feet

wide), running in a direction nearly north and south and divided at intervals by openings which indicate the position of the ancient door-ways.

These appear to have been twelve in number (six on each side); but as the end walls, which are now nearly level with the ground, may have been pierced in a similar manner, it is uncertain whether it had twelve or fourteen entrances. The whole site of the Hall was occupied by a great timber building, 45 feet high, ornamented, carved, and painted in colours. Tara is considered to have been built chiefly of wood from the oak forests, anciently so abundant.

To return to Tuathal. In the seventh year of his reign, in punishment for an insult offered to his daughters, he imposed the Boruma or tribute on the Leinstermen, which was afterwards paid during the reign of forty monarchs. Tuathal had at that time two beautiful daughters, Fithir and Dairfine, "and Eochu, son of Eochu Doimlen, King of Leinster took to wife the elder daughter, even Fithir; for at that time it was not the custom in Erinn for the younger to be married before the elder. Then Eochu brought his wife to Rath Immil in Leinster, now that daughter of Tuathal was a beloved foster-child of the King of Connaught. Howbeit the Leinstermen said to Eochu 'better is the daughter whom thou leftest,' wherefore he went north again, and said to Tuathal: 'The daughter whom I

wedded is dead, and I desire that thine other daughter be given to me.' So Tuathal answered and said: 'If I had one and fifty daughters, they would be given to thee until one of them was enjoyed as a wife.'

"Thereafter was given him the second daughter, even Dairfine—she was foster-child of the King of Ulad (Ulster)—and Eochu brought her to Rath Immil, in the place where the other daughter was before her. But when Fithir beheld Dairfine, she dies at once of shock. When Dairfine beheld her sister's death, she dies of grief." [1]

Tuathal being informed of their untimely deaths and of Eochu's perfidy, mustered an army of 22,000 men; and aided by the Kings of Connaught and Ulster, marched by Maynooth to Naas, one of the residences of the Kings of Leinster, where he encamped.

Meanwhile the Lagenians marched to intercept the Ultonians, who were advancing by another route to join Tuathal, and who, at Leith Duma, were completely defeated, Fergus Febhail, King of Ulster, with many of his nobles, being among the slain.

Tuathal, or Tool, and his Connaught allies, marching through Kildare, burned the palace-forts of Naas, Knockaulin, and Mullaghmast. Then turning into Leix and Offaly, he burned Rearymore,

[1] *The Boruma* translated from the *Book of Leinster* by Whitley Stokes in the *Revue Celtique*, 1892. The *Annals of Teernagh*, quoted above, are given in the *Revue*, vols. 16-18.

and Baire Breasail "a fortress of undecaying wood." Near Rath Immil he encountered the Leinstermen, to the number of 9,000 under Eochu, and after a sharp engagement, put them to the rout, Eochu, who was beheaded, and a score of other princes being left on the field.

Still the Leinstermen refused to give satisfaction, till, after several other raids, they sued for peace, and agreed to give Tuathal the *eric* (*g*) of his daughters, namely: 15,000 cows; 15,000 swine; 15,000 mantles; 15,000 chains of silver; 15,000 wethers; 15,000 cauldrons of brass; a great cauldron of brass to hold 12 beeves, and 12 swine; 30 white and red-eared cows, with calves of the same colour; and men and maidens for his service.[1] From the number of cows exacted, this tax was called the *Boroma*—bo being Irish for a cow. We shall often have occasion to refer to the Boruma in future.

The levying of this degrading tax was the cause of many sanguinary conflicts from Tuathals time down; for on nearly every occasion the Leinstermen resisted the imposition; and in consequence were at perpetual enmity with the High-kings. It continued to be levied down to the seventh century, when it was remitted by Finnachta the Festive, a descendant of Tool, at the solicitation of St. Moling, a Lagenian.

Tuathal, by making his son, Felimy, heir apparent,

[1] *The Boroma.*

aroused the enmity of Mal, King of Ulster, who defeated and slew him in an engagement at the hill of Kenguba in Dalariada, in Counties Antrim and Down, A.D. 160, after a reign of thirty years. Mal reigned four years, when he fell by the hand of Felimy, son of Tool.

Felimy the Lawgiver (Fedlimidh Reachtmar) ascended the throne, A.D. 164. Keating says he was called Reachtmar because he originated *Lex Talionis* in Ireland; but O'Flaherty says he changed the law into a more lenient penalty (called eric) according to the nature of the crime.

This King's mother was Baine (*h*), daughter of Scal Balbh or the "Dumb Champion" King of Finland,[1] who gave her name to Cnoc mBaine—now Knockmany, Co. Tyrone—on the summit of which there is still to be seen a remarkable Cairn, with inscribed stones, said by some to mark her grave. Baine, also, according to the *Four Masters*, built the palace-fort of Rathmore, the remains of which are still visible in the palace grounds at Clogher, about a mile distant from Knockmany. This rath is described in the *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries* for 1898, as strongly fortified, being surrounded by three deep fosses or circumvallations. "On the southern side of the declivity of the hill on which it is situated may be witnessed at intervals on the hill-side smaller circumvallations

[1] *Ogygia; Four Masters.*

which, on the occasion of an invasion, could be flooded from an adjoining lake," of which, however, there is little trace.

Some time after Felimy's accession, he was obliged, to send his troops—to the number of 10,000—under the command of his son, Eochy Fin Fothart, and Lewy Leeshagh, grandson of Conal Cearnach, Chief of the Red Branch Knights of Ulster, to the aid of Cu Corb, King of Leinster, who was worsted by Derfine, King of Munster, in several battles. Derfine accordingly took possession of Leinster as far as Athantrosdan (*i.e.* the Pilgrim's Ford) now Athy, near Mullaghmast.

Cu Corb, joined by the royal troops, routed the Momonians at Athy; and again at Morett in Offaly. After great slaughter on both sides, the Momonians were at length driven across the Barrow; and pursued as far as Bealach More, in Ossory. Cu Corb afterwards, in consideration of his services bestowed a territory, in the present Counties Carlow and Wexford, on Eochy Finn Fothart—afterwards called from him Fotharta, which remained in possession of his descendants—the O'Nolans—until the seventeenth century.[1] Lewy received a territory in the present Queen's County, afterwards from him called Leeshagh, Leesh or Leix, which was held by his descendants—the O'Mores—up to the end of the sixteenth century.

[1] *Annals Clonmacnoise;* Keating's *History.*

The Leinstermen being now reinstated by the royal troops, Felimy demanded the Boroma, which on being refused, he marched into Leinster, and exacted it by the sword, after routing Cu Corb (*i*), whom he slew at the base of Mount Leinster in Co. Carlow. A sepulchral cairn still to be seen on the top of the hill, marks his grave. This King was the ancestor of the great Leinster families—the Kavanaghs, O'Connors Faly, O'Dempseys, O'Byrnes, etc.

Felimy, married Una, daughter of the King of Denmark,[1] by whom he was father of the celebrated Conn Cead Catha, or Conn of the Hundred Battles, on whose birth, which happened on a Monday, many wonderful things happened, as the bards would have us believe. The rivers Suir, the Nore, and the Barrow; Lough Reagh or Ree, the Lake of Killarney, and Lough Neagh; and the Bile Tortan, a celebrated ash-tree near Ardbrackan, Co. Meath; the Craebh Mughna, a famous oak-tree near Ballymoon, Co. Carlow; and the Bile Dathin an ash-tree in Febil, Co. Westmeath, all sprang into existence on that eventful night:

"The night on which Conn was born,
He was welcomed by great Erinn,
On it sprang up Bile Tortan, Eo Rosa,
(Their homage that night was no indignity),
Craebh Mughna and Craebh Dathin.

[1] *Ogygia*; Keating's *History*.

The night on which Conn was born,
He was welcomed by great Erinn,
On it burst forth in prosperous course,
Loch Reagh, Loch Lein, Loch Eatach.

The night on which Conn was born,
He was welcomed by great Erinn,
On it burst forth without delay,
The Suir, Eoir, and Bearbha." [1]

So sang Fintan (*j*) the "salmon of all knowledge." Five great military roads (*k*) leading to Tara were also finished (or "discovered") by Felimy at that time. They were: the Slighe Assail which extended westwards to Lough Owel near Mullingar; the Slighe Midhluchra, or Meeluchra, which led into Ulster; the Slighe Culan, or Wicklow road, which passes through Dublin to Bray, crossing the Liffey on a Ford of Hurdles, where the Whitworth Bridge now stands; Slighe More, or the Great road, the position of which was determined by the Escer Riada, a line of gravel-hills extending from Dublin to Galway; and Slighe Dala, extending from the Southern side of Tara Hill in the direction of Ossory. The most important of the ancient Irish roads, Dr. Joyce says, were paved with blocks of stone like the Roman roads.

Felimy died after a reign of ten years, and was succeeded by his son, Conn, A.D. 174.

[1] *Battle of Magh Lena, or Moylena*, edited by O'Curry for the Celtic Society.

Conn got his surname, according to Keating, from one hundred battles fought by him against the provincial Kings.

> "The warlike Conn came off with victory,
> In Munster, and an hundred battles won;
> So many times with laurels was he crowned,
> And triumphed over Ulster, and in Leinster
> He fought in sixty battles with success."

Conn's first exploit was to lead an army against the Leinstermen for non payment of the Boroma which he twice exacted by the sword. On the third occasion, however, he was totally vanquished in a decisive engagement at Mullaghmast, by Eochy, King of Leinster, who, marching into Meath, took possession of Tara. For four years the Leinstermen kept possession, till at length Conn mustering a great army, routed and drove them back to Leinster, after which they were obliged to pay their tribute during the rest of his reign.[1]

About this time Cumhal, or Cool, Captain of the Fenians, or Militia, to Conn, and his step-uncle, eloped with "Moran of the Beautiful Neck," daughter of Thady a distinguished Druid. This lady was sought in marriage by several distinguished men of the time; and among the rest by Cool, great-grandson of Nuadhat Neacht, King of Leinster.

[1] *Ogygia.*

Thady rejected his suit rather scornfully whereupon Cool carried off the lady, without the consent of her father, and made her his wife. By this Moran he was father of the renowned Finn M'Cumhal, or Cool. The Druid complained to Conn, who commanded Cool to restore the lady, as he refused he was forced to fly with her to Scotland, whither he was attended by a slender body of Fenian friends. In his exile hearing that Crimthan of the Yellow hair was elevated to the throne of Leinster; and thinking that his own claims were higher, he immediately returned home and assumed the sovereignty of the province. Conn at once prepared to take the field against him; and assisted by Conal Cruachna, *i.e.* of Croghan, the Firbolg King of Connaught, his foster father, and Hugh Mac Morna, chief of the territory of Maen Mhuigh, or Monmoy, Co. Roscommon, and Captain of the Fenians of Connaught, he marched into Leinster against Cool, who was joined by Mogh Neid, King of Munster, and his son Eoghan More, and many other princes of that province.

Near Cumhal's palace of Rath Cumhal, now Rath Cool, Co. Dublin, the rival armies met, and a furious battle ensued, in which Cool was defeated and slain by Mac Morna.[1]

Soon after this, a dispute as to the succession to the Kingship of Munster, involved Conn in another great war with Mogh Neid, King of that province,

[1] *Battle of Moylena.*

who resigned in favour of his son Eoghan More, whom he set up to the prejudice of the princes Conaire and Macniad, whom he banished from the province.

The two sought refuge with Conn, who gave them for their support the territory of Breagh in Meath; and at the same time Imchad of the Red Arms who had been banished from Ulster by another and more powerful competitor for the throne, received the territory of Teffla in the present Co. Longford.

Conn happened at that time to have three beautiful daughters, Main, Sadhbh, or Sawe, and Saraid, whom he gave in marriage to Imchad, Macniad, and Conaire, respectively.[1]

Mogh Neid, learning that Conn had thus received his enemies, declared war on him, and said that if he could he would depose him.

Joined by his allies, Crimthan of the Yellow Hair, with the warriors of Leinster, and Conal of Cruachan and Mac Morna, Conn advanced to give battle to Mogh who was marching on Tara.

At Magh Cruinn in Fercall, King's Co., Conn's advanced guard, consisting of his household troops under the command of Assail the Great (*a quo* Slighe Assail), encountered and defeated Mogh's guard after a spirited engagement. The great warriors of those days were likewise poets of merit;

[1] *Annals Clonmacnoise.*

and in memory of this achievement Assail composed the lines :

" We were wounded,—we wounded them—
We dealt slaughter to their hosts on all sides ;
Conn's household prevailed
Over the young men of the plain of Tualaine."

After a bloody engagement at Magh Siul, or the Plain of Siul, in the north of Ely, King's County, Conn completely defeated Mogh, who was numbered among the slain.

Eoghan, his son, with the remnant of his forces retreated to Munster, and sent his Druid, Dergdamsa, to ask Conn for leave to bury his father, which was granted, and there on the battlefield, a capacious grave of sods was made for Mogh, who was buried in it with his arms and armour :

" In his right hand the broad-sword, before him the shield,
And the helmet still guarding his head ;
Again the red lightnings of war will he wield,
Again lead the thousands he led."

Conn, guided by Macniad and Conary, pursued Eoghan to Carn Buidhe in Co. Cork, where he made a stand, and attempted a surprise, but he was again defeated, and compelled to fly to Bear Island in Bantry Bay, where he took shipping.

Returning that night he again attacked Conn in his camp at Carn Buidhe, and slew 350 of the

Leinstermen with the son of their King, Eolang of the Red Arms, after which he escaped to Spain.

Conn having divided Munster between Conaire and Macniad, returned to Tara, and reigned in peace for nine years until, at the end of that time, Eoghan landed, with his brother-in-law, Fraoch Mileasach, son of Eibhear, King of Spain, and 2,000 Spanish warriors, in Bantry Bay, and deposed Conaire and Macniad. He then, supported by Fiacha the Lame, King of Leinster, marched to Broadford on the river Barrow, while the men of Ulster, who had dispossessed Imchad, Conn's son-in-law, advanced on Tara. Conn, deserted by the greater part of his subjects, abandoned Tara, and took refuge with the King of Connaught. Eoghan being informed that Conn had left Tara, and that he might take possession of the palace, said: "That is, true, Tara is the original seat of the King's of Erin; but, as he once followed me across the province of Munster, I shall now follow him into the province of Connaught." Leaving Munster in charge of the Lagenians, he marched by Athlone towards Magh Aoi in Connaught.

Meanwhile Conn with his ally Conal, King of Connaught, and Hugh Mac Morna, marched in full muster to the brink of Tobar Tuilske in Roscommon, where they saw Eoghan's forces occupying some hills in the distance. Hearing that Eoghan would not be satisfied with less than the half of Erinn, Conn

"bowed his head, and knawed the tree of his spear from the hilt to its mounting, and until his white teeth were checked by its hard venomed socket," he then said :

Conn.

"O Conal give us thy counsel,
A great disaster has been brought upon us,
Eogan the slender-fingered King of Fail,
The half of Erinn out of our hands has taken."

Conal.

"Do thou as thou dost to others,
Keep thy shield upon thy shade,
O mighty pillar, give a battle upon
The plain to Mogh Nuadh (Eogan More)."

Conn.

"The men of Uladh of the steeds have abandoned us,
And the men of Laighin of rapid plunders,
So that there are now for the just cause
But myself and you, O Conal.
Shall we wait for a powerful gathering,
O son of Morna of the rich cloaks ?
Until the foe shall see your greatness,
I ask what is your counsel ?"

They decided to try a ruse, and that night evacuating Magh Aoi, they encamped close to the enemy. Then Conn ordered a fire for every two or three of his men, which so deceived Eogan as to his strength, that he sent his Druid to Conn to make terms.

Conn summoned his Counsellors, and it was agreed that Eoghan should have half the Kingdom, so that when his Spaniards departed, they would engage him at once. For a line of demarcation they fixed on a natural ridge of sand-hills, called Esker Riada, which can still be traced running across Ireland, with little interruption from Dublin to Galway. The northern portion was called Leth Chuin (Leh Conn) or Conn's half, and the southern Leth Mogha (Leh Mogh) *alias* Eoghan's half; for Eoghan had many aliases. For fifteen years as the bards reckon, this division continued:

"Fifteen years I do say,
Were Eoghan and Conn in co-reign,
Until Eoghan fell, who refused no man,
The lion of sharp valour."

At length, the Spaniards being anxious to return home, and suspecting Conn's intentions, Eoghan sought a pretext for breaking the truce; and noticing that more vessels came to Conn's part of the harbour of Dublin than to his, he demanded an equal share of the profits of the port. Conn replied that he would not place arms or clothing, or armour, under the same rule of division as territory whereupon Eoghan marched to contend for the High-kingship. The Ultonians under Eochy Mundearg or Red Neck, at the same time advanced on Tara. Conn who was then at Teffia some miles

away, leaving that country and Connaught unprotected, marched to defend "Tara and its wealth." At Rathmore he was met by the tribes of Tara, his brothers descendants, who related their distress to him. Conn cheered and encouraged them, and spoke this lay on the occasion:

"O Sons of Fedlimidh Reachtmar
Of the race of Tuathal Teachtmar
Eoghan has won without doubt,
The province of Connaught from Ath Cliath (downwards),
Though long I am in Tara,
I have never felt in good spirits,
Since the day on which I first was told,
That Eoghan owned the full half of Erin."

Conn marched with his host in pursuit of the Ultonians, who had plundered Tara and Meath, and defeated them with great slaughter, so that hardly one escaped, Eochy Muindearg being beheaded. After this battle Conn sent Fin M'Cool, with 2,000 warriors to protect Tara with its appurtenances; "and if I live," he said, "you shall receive out of their profits the price of preserving them; and if I do not survive, the pledges and hostages of Erin are in Tara, and spend there your glory and prosperity, until relieved by the young princes who survive us."

Conn then proceeded to Moylena in Kings County where, at dawn of day, he surprised Eoghan in his

camp, and slew his ally, the King of Spain's son, who was divided into four parts by " two full cross-strokes " from the swords of Conn and Eochy, the One Eyed. Eoghan rallied his men and fought furiously, meeting Conn in single combat, the two fell, pierced through with each others spears. Conn's men coming upon the scene, however, despatched Eoghan with their swords, and raised Conn on their spears and lances, and carried him off the field, where Eoghan and his brother-in-law were interred. Two little hillocks there, are still pointed out as the graves of Eoghan and his ally.

This was the last great battle fought by Conn, who was celebrated as much for his good government as for his many battles. His battle-dress is thus described in the tract entitled *The Battle of Magh Leana*, which contains details of the contests between the two monarchs, he wore, it says: a long, wide, dark-grey, skin-shirt, with three beautiful brooches of gold in it; a well-fitting coat of distinction, bound with girdles and with embroidered borders of red gold, outside this a heavy strong-ringed coat of mail, with a head-piece of the same kind; light and strong leg-armour of fine spun thread of bronze; two lacerating gloves upon his hands; upon his neck a wide collar of gold; and upon his head his gold and silver diadem of a chief in which were fifty carbuncle gems of beautiful rare stones. By his side a blue, sharp-edged, rich-

hilted sword; and a fine embossed shield of beautiful devices upon his back; in his hand two wide socketted battle-spears with rings of gold upon their necks.

In the latter years of his reign Conn was disturbed by the pretensions of Tibraite Tireach, King of Ulster, son of Mal, who fell in an engagement with Conn's father, Felimy the Lawgiver. Tibraite, unwilling or unable to meet him in the field, employed some desperate ruffians, disguised as women, to assassinate him, which they did at Tuath Amrois,—as he was preparing for the feast of Tara—in the 35th year of his reign, and A.D. 212.

Conn's name, says Dr. O'Curry,[1] is connected with two distinct "Prophecies," one delivered by himself, and entitled the Baile Chuinn, or Conn's ecstacy, the other delivered to him and entitled the Baile an Scal, or Champion's ecstacy. These compositions, which are still preserved in the British Museum, and which, O'Curry thinks, were written about the year 1,000, are chiefly valued for the succession of the High-kings which they contain, and which are brought down to date. The Baile Chuinn commences with Conn's son Art, and goes on to Niall Glunduff. The history of the Baile an Scal is thus given in the preface to that "Prophecy":

[1] *Lectures on MS. Materials of Ancient Irish History,*

One morning Conn repaired at Sunrise to the battlements of Ri Raith, or the King's fortress, at Tara, accompanied by his Druids, Mael and Bloc, and his poets Ethan, Corb, and Cesarn; for he was accustomed every day to repair to this place with the same company, for the purpose of watching the firmament, that no hostile aerial beings should descend upon Erin unknown to him. Suddenly, while standing in his usual place, he found himself and his companions enveloped in a mist so thick that they knew not where they were. They had not continued long in this condition until they heard the tramp of a horseman approaching them; and immediately a spear was cast three times in succession towards them, coming nearer them each time. The Druid then cried out: "It is a violation of the sacred person of a king to whoever casts a spear at Conn in Tara." The horseman then came up and saluted Conn; and invited him and his companions to his house. He led them into a noble plain where they saw a royal court, into which they entered, and found it occupied by a beautiful and richly dressed princess with a silver vat full of red ale; and a golden ladle in a golden cup before her. The knight on entering the palace showed his guests to appropriate seats; and sat himself in a princely chair at the head of the apartment. Then addressing himself to Conn, he said: "I wish to inform you I am not a living prince, but one of

Adam's race come back from death, and my name is Lugh Mac Ceithlenn; and I am come to tell you the length of your own reign, and the name of every king who shall succeed you in Tara; and the princess whom you see here is the sovereignty of Erin for ever."

The princess then presented Conn with the bare rib of an ox, and the bare rib of a boar, and subsequently she presented him with a silver pail, and the golden ladle and cup. She then, taking up the ladle, filled the cup, and said: "who shall this be given to?" The knight answered and said: "Give it to Conn of the hundred battles, that is, he shall fight an hundred battles, *viz.*—the battle of Breagh; the battle of Eli; the battle of Aiche; the battle of Macha; the battle of Cean-tire; seven battles of Magh Linne; the battle of Cualigne; seven battles in Clairine, etc. Fifty years shall he reign when he shall die:

"In his combat with Tibraite
Though unequal in strength their advance:
It is he that shall be wounded while cleaving
The hosts that shall accompany *him.*
Woeful for Conn of the Hundred Battles
After having paved Drech Mhagh,
He is killed after having gone round all the bays
On *Tuesday* in *Tuath Amrois.*"

The princess said again: "who shall this cup be

given to?" "Give it," said the knight, "to Art the son of Conn, a man of three shouts:

"He shall fight the battle of Fidh-Ros,
In which shall fall great warriors,
On the morning of Magh Mucruimhe,
It will be woeful for Art the son of Conn,
With the sons of Olioll Olum.
Upon Thursday he fights the battle,
In which he shall fall by the sons of Lughaid,
Thirty years only shall he reign
At the time that he shall be slain."

And thus does the princess continue to put her questions, and the knight to answer, on to Fergal, son of Maelduin, who was slain in the battle of Allen in 718.

Conn married, first, Aefa, daughter of Alpin, a Scottish, or Pictish prince; and secondly, Sanda, daughter of Crimthan Cas, King of Leinster. By the first he had Sadbh, Sabia, or Saw, who married Macniad, half King of Munster; and after his death Olioll Olum (*l*) King of Munster; Conla, and Art or Artur.

Sanda was mother of: Crina; Main who married Imchad, and was mother of the three Fergus's, one of whom was afterwards King of Ulster, and Monarch of Ireland; and Saraid married to Conary II., who succeeded Conn.[1]

Conary, after the defeat of Eoghan More, was

[1] *Ogygia*; Keating's *History*

offered the sovereignty of Munster by Conn, but he refused, saying: "Give it to M'Niadh rather, for I am thy faithful vassal, but M'Niadh is not submissive to thee." "Take thou my blessing for that speech," said Conn, "Munster shall be divided between you two, moreover, I hope that thou wilt obtain the sovereignty of Erin after me." [1] which fell out as he had said.

Conary after a reign of eight years was slain by Neimidh, Prince of the Ernai of Munster, A.D. 220. By his Queen, Saraid, daughter of Conn, he was father of Carbery Riada, who acquired a territory in Antrim, extending from the Ravel Water northwards, to which he gave his name of Dal Riada, *i.e.* Riada's portion, now called the Route, which is considered by Dr. Joyce (*Irish Names*) to be a corruption of Riada.

He also established that Irish or Scotic monarchy of Dal Riada in North Britain, which, in the course of time, not only extended its sway over the whole of the modern Scotland, but transmitted through the race of the Stuarts a long succession of Monarchs to Great Britain.[2]

Conaire was succeeded by his nephew Artur or Art, surnamed Enfar, or the Melancholy, because, according to Keating, he was the only surviving son of Conn, his two brothers having been murdered

[1] *Battle of Moylena.* [2] *Ogygia*

by their uncles Fiacha Suidhe, and Eochy Finn Fothart, or Eochy the Fair, the noted foe of Art:

"Eochaidh Finn and Fiacadh Suidhe,
Brothers of Conn the hero of the island,
Destroyed the princes Conly and Crinna,
Brothers of Art, at whose untimely fate
He grieved, and with continued sorrow pined,
And so was called the Melancholy Art."

Art's reign was marked by the rebellion of his nephew, Lewy, son of M'Niad, who, having been defeated by his step-father Olioll Olum, King of Munster, at the battle of Kenfebrat in Co. Cork, was forced to seek refuge in Britain, where he was well received by one of the Kings of that country.

Returning some years later with Benne Brit, the King's son, and a large body of foreign adventurers, he overran and ravaged West Connaught.

Art, instantly mustering his forces, marched into Connaught, where he was joined by the sons of Olioll Olum, with the forces of Munster. At Moymucrum, near Athenry, eight miles from Galway, where Lewy had landed, a bloody battle was fought. Art having been cut down by the renowned champion Lewy Laga, his men began to give way, and at length were put to the rout with great slaughter. Along with Art, fell his nephews,

the seven sons of Olioll Olum, or Olioll of the Bare Ear.

The victor marching to Tara, was proclaimed King by his supporters, A.D. 250.

The place where Art fell, called Tulach Art, between Oranmore and Kilcornan, close to the townland of Moyvalla, is still shown beside a well at which, according to tradition, he stopped his horse to snatch a drink.

Art was the author of a poem on the place of his own sepulture—Trevit, Co. Meath—which is preserved in the *Leabhar na h'Uidhre.*

Another poem by his queen, Maeve Leith Dearg, or the Half-red, daughter of Conan de Cualan, or Conan of Wicklow, preserved in the *Book of Leinster,* is given in the Appendix to O'Curry's *Lectures,* and in *A Treasury of Irish Poetry* by T. W. Rolleston.

This poem, a lament, was composed on the death of her first husband, Cucorb, King of Leinster, son of Mogh Corb :

'Raise the Cromlech high!
Mac Mogh Corb is slain
And other mens' renown
Has leave to live again.

Cold at last he lies
'Neath the burial stone
All the blood he shed
Could not save his own.

Stately, strong he went,
Through his nobles all
When we passed together
Up the banquet-hall

Dazzling white as lime
Was his body fair,
Cherry red his cheeks,
Raven black his hair."

Cu Corb must have been a very young man when he was slain by King Felimy, as stated, at the base of Mount Leinster:

"Here he fought with Leinster—
Last of all his frays—
On the hill of Cu Corb's Fate,
High his cromlech raise."

By this Maeve, who is credited with the erection of *Rath Maeve*, a great fortress about a mile south of the King's Rath at Tara, he left no issue, but according to the *Ogygia*, by Trea, wife of Lugny Firtrea, and daughter of Cian, son of Olioll Olum, he left one son Cormac M'Art, *i.e.* son of Art.

"'The Melancholy Art who filled the throne
Of Ireland, had but one son, the brave Cormac,
A prince, most liberal, generous and free,
Who rais'd the grandeur of the Irish nation,
And made it famed throughout the world." [1]

Cormac, who was still in his boyhood, was forced

[1] Keating's *History*.

to lie concealed for some time with his friends in Connaught, till Lewy's usurpation and his severe rule, after some time disposed his subjects to wish for his removal.

To that end, Cormac, at the solicitation of some powerful friends of his father, appeared suddenly at Tara, where his person, by this time, had ceased to be known.

One day, we are told, he entered the Judgment Hall of the palace, at a moment that a case of royal privilege was brought before the King, Lewy, for adjudication. The case is thus related: Certain sheep, the property of a certain widow, had strayed into the Queen's private lawn and eaten of the grass. They were captured by some officers of the household, and the case was brought before the King for judgment. On hearing the case he condemned the sheep to be forfeited.

Young Cormac, however, hearing the sentence, declared that it was unjust, and said that as the sheep had eaten but the fleece of the land, they should forfeit only their own fleeces.

This view of the law appeared to be so wise and reasonable to the people around, that a murmur of approval ran through the hall. Lewy, thereupon, starting from his seat exclaimed: "That is the judgment of a king," and immediately recognizing the young prince ordered him to be seized, but Cormac succeeded in making his escape. The

people then, having recognized their rightful chief, soon revolted against the usurper; upon which he was driven to Munster,[1] where, soon after, he was killed by one of Cormac's supporters—a poet named Fercheas—while bestowing gold and silver on the literati of Ireland at Gortan-Oir, near Derragrath, Co Tipperary.

Having received hostages from the provincial kings, Cormac, imagining that he had established his claim to the throne, invited Fergus, King of Ulster, surnamed of the Black Tooth, his aunt's son, to be one of a party which he was about to entertain at North Bregia. This Fergus, an ambitious and powerful prince, who had long aspired to the monarchy, and only awaited a favourable opportunity to destroy Cormac, gladly accepted the invitation in the hope of executing his design. Accordingly, when all had drunk deeply, one of his attendants, applying a lighted torch to Cormac's long hair and beard, attempted to deprive him of the crown for ever;[2] for no king with a personal blemish could reign at Tara.

Fergus (and his attendants) escaped from the palace in the confusion, and was crowned at Tara by the Ultonians.

For several months Cormac lived in retirement with his old friends in Connaught, until he had

[1] O'Curry's *Lectures.* [2] *Ogygia.*

recovered from the effects of the burning, when he prepared to give battle to the usurper.

His uncle Tiege or Thady, son of Cian and grandson of Olioll Olum, without delay raised a numerous army; and advised him to secure the aid of the invincible hero, Lewy Laga, his father's slayer, brother of Olioll Olum and "a host in himself," who lived in retirement at Aherlow.

Cormac set off without delay to seek Lewy, whom he found in the Glen, bathing in a stream. Drawing his sword, he held it over the old warrior's head and cried: "Death hangs over thee, O Lughaid." "I will give thee the life of another instead of my own," answered Lewy, but Cormac said, "I will take no life except it be that of a king in battle." Lewy replied, "I will give thee that." Cormac again said "I will take no life except it be that of Fergus Black Tooth, King of Ulster." "Thou shalt have it," said Lewy. "Pledge thine honour upon it," said Cormac. "I do so," said Lewy.[1]

On joining Thady they marched to Crinna, near Stackallan Bridge, on the river Boyne, where Fergus and his brothers, Fergus of the Long Hair, and Fergus of the Crooked Teeth, were drawn up ready to receive them.

Cormac, persuaded by Thady, watched the combat from a neighbouring height.

For some hours the battle raged, neither side

[1] Miss Hull's *Pagan Ireland.*

gaining an advantage, till Lewy, fighting his way to Fergus the Long-haired, engaged him in single combat, and, having cut off his head, laid it at Cormac's feet. He next despatched Fergus of the Crooked Teeth, and finally Fergus Black Tooth. The Ultonians then began to give way, when, after a sharp struggle, they were completely overthrown.

Proceeding to Tara, Cormac was inaugurated, A.D. 254. Thady he rewarded with a territory extending from the river Liffey to near Drumiskin in the present Co. Louth, afterwards called from his (Thady's) father Cian-achta, which remained in possession of his descendants till they were dispossessed by the English.

Cormac was the most splendid of the pagan monarchs of Ireland; and his reign, says Dr. O'Curry, was one of the most brilliant and important in Irish History. "The world was full of all goodness in his time; there were fruit and fatness of the land, with abundant produce of the sea; and peace, ease and contentment." [1]

In the tenth year of his reign he was again obliged to engage the Ultonians, whom he defeated at the battle of Granard; and again at Slighe Cualigne in Co. Louth.

He was less fortunate, however, in his expedition against Fiacha, King of Munster (grandson of

[1] *Book of Ballymote*, quoted in O'Curry's Lectures.

Olioll Olum), from whom he endeavoured to exact additional tribute.

On reaching Knocklong (the "Hill of the Encampment") Co. Limerick, he halted his army, and encamped on the hill called up to that time Drumdamghaire, *i.e.* the Hill of the Oxen.

Fiacha marched to oppose him, and took up a position on the slope of the opposite hill—Slieve Reagh.

After a protracted struggle, and many combats in the intervening plain, Cormac, defeated and baffled, was forced to retreat, and was pursued with great loss, as far as Ossory, by Fiacha, who obliged him to give security that he would repair the injury done to Munster.[1]

Having done this, he again took the field against him two years later, and compelled him to submit after defeating him in several battles, in one of which—the battle of Cnoc Samhain, near Bruree, Co. Limerick—his grandfather Cian (*m*) fell.

Tiege, son of Cian, had a son Cormac Gaileng (*i.e.*, of the dishonoured spear) who, about this time, having fallen under the displeasure of his father, fled from Munster to Connaught, where he received from Cormac, the Monarch, a district which had previously been inhabited by the Firbolgs or Attacots, and which from him and his son Luighne (pronounced Leyney) obtained the name

[1] Joyce's *Irish Names.*

of Gailenga, now included in the Barony of Gallen, Co. Mayo; and Leyney, now the Barony of Leyney, Co. Sligo.

In the fourteenth year of his reign, Cormac having equipped a large fleet, began to ravage the coast of Scotland, or Pictland till, after three years, that country was compelled to acknowledge his sway.[1]

About the year 269 he was obliged to march against Dunlang, son of Enna Niadh, King of Leinster who, having invaded Meath, burned part of Tara, including the Pagan Convent of Claenfearta, on the western slope of the hill, in which perished 30 princesses with 3,000 maidens. Cormac met Dunlang in single combat, and slew him, together with twelve other Leinster princes, after which he imposed the Boruma with an increase.[2]

In 276 he proceeded against the Ultonians, whom he defeated with great slaughter, near the Ravel Water, Co. Antrim, after killing Aengus Finn, their King, son of Fergus of the Black Tooth, whose supporters he banished to the Isle of Man, and the Hebrides. Teernagh, the Annalist, says for this reason he was called Cormac Ulfada, but some take this to mean "of the long Beard."

In the 23rd year of his reign he sent his son Ceallach at the head of his army against the Leinstermen, to enforce the Boru; but Ceallach exceeded

[1] *Four Masters.* [2] *Annals of Teernagh.*

his instructions and insulted the Leinstermen, by bringing also 150 maidens into captivity.

Among these there happened to be one who belonged to the tribe called the Desi, *i.e.* the southerners or Southern people, because they—descendants of Fiacha Suidhe, brother of Conn of the Hundred Battles—dwelt at the south side of Tara.

Aengus, surnamed Dread Spear, son of Fiacha, and Chief of the Desi, on hearing of the degradation of his kinswoman, went straightaway to Tara, where he found her among the other captives, fetching water for the palace from the Well of Nemnach (*n*), the source of the Nith, on which was erected, for a bondmaid of Cormac, the first water mill in Ireland.

On restoring the maiden to her parents, he again hurried to Tara, where he arrived after sunset unarmed; for there was a law prohibiting any person from coming into Tara after sunset with arms.

Taking down Cormac's spear from the place where it hung on the rack in the Hall, he killed Ceallach with one thrust of the weapon, and in drawing it out, in his fury, accidentally struck the King's eye with the point and destroyed it, while at the same moment the end of the handle struck the house steward, and killed him on the spot. In the confusion that followed, Aengus escaped and reached his own home in safety.

It being unlawful for a King with a personal

blemish to reign at Tara, as we have observed, Cormac abdicated and retired to his kingly cottage at Cletty, on the south side of the river Boyne, near Stackallan Bridge.

Meantime he began criminal proceedings against Aengus and the Desi, to recover damages for the threefold injury; and in a great assembly convened on the Hill of Usnagh it was decided that, instead of being free as heretofore, the tribe should pay tribute to Cormac and his descendants, and acknowledge themselves as vassals for ever.

The Desi rejected these terms with indignation, and a long feud followed, which ended in the expulsion of the whole tribe from their original home, now included in the two Baronies of "Deece" in Co. Meath, which still bears their name, though anglicised.[1]

For many years the Desi wandered through different parts of Leinster and Munster, till at length they settled in the latter province, in a territory in Co. Waterford, part of which is now included in the Baronies of "Decies" and of which O'Phelan was Chief in 1172. Another branch settled in that part of South Wales called Dyfed, under Eochy, whose descendants were styled Kings of Dyfed (see Chapter III.).

In Cletty, where Cormac passed the remainder of his life, and which remained in possession of his

[1] *Irish Names.*

descendants till the reign of Murkertac M'Erc, he produced most of those works which have made his name famous.

Here he composed the work called *Teagusc na Righ*, or Instructions for a King, which M'Geoghegan (*Annals of Clonmacnoise*) says, contains "as goodly principles and moral doctrines as Cato or Aristotle ever did write." This was written for the instruction of his son Carbery, who now occupied the throne, and copies are still preserved in the Books of Lecan and Ballymote. Carbery asks his father: "What is the right life for a king?" Cormac replies: "That is plain. A king must exercise patience; he must be affable without haughtiness; he must strictly observe covenants and agreements; he must execute the laws with exactitude, but with mercy. He must pay diligent attention to history, and must perform his promises. He must keep peace on his borders and protect his frontiers.

"When he makes a hosting let his cause be just. Let him pay the lawful dues of his vassals. Let him honour the nobles, and respect the poets and historians; and adore the Great God.

"It is his duty, too, to exercise boundless charity; to see to the prosperity of agriculture, and the condition of merchandise. To suppress falsehoods, and criminal deeds; to attend the sick; and discipline his armies; above all things to speak

truth, for it is through the truth of a king God gives prosperity and favourable seasons."

Carbery asks again: "What is the chief of all his duties?" Cormac answers: "The lifting up of good men, and the suppression of evil doers; the giving of freedom to those who do well, and the restriction of the unjust."

It is necessary for the welfare of a country, he says, to have "frequent convocations of wise men to investigate its affairs and abolish unwise laws;" and "the Government should be in the hands of the nobles; and the chieftains should be upright; and the study of every art and language should be encouraged."

On public occasions the King is "to light the lamp and welcome his guests with clapping of hands on Samhain (now All Souls' Day); in the banqueting house to prepare for them comfortable seats, and have nimble cup bearers to serve them; to have moderate music, short stories, and a welcoming countenance, and to make cheerful and pleasant conversation before the learned."

"A king should be chosen: for his noble appearance and birth; for his experience and wisdom; his prudence and magnanimity; his eloquence; his bravery in battle, and the number of his friends. He must be without personal blemish of any sort; easy of access and affable; mild in peace and fierce in war; beloved by his people; discerning, patient

and faithful. He is to support orphans; to be cheerful with his intimates, and to appear splendid as the sun at the banquet of the Mead House (*Tech Midchuarta*) of Tara." [1] These precepts were read at the installation of the early Irish princes.

Under Cormac's auspices a general revision of the Annals of the kingdom was entered upon, and the national records which had been kept regularly in the Psalter of Tara, received many corrections and improvements; but no fragment of the Psalter is identified as now remaining, though O'Reilly (*Irish Writers*) thinks there may be a copy preserved in the British Museum.

In the *Book of Ballymote* Cormac's personal appearance is thus described: His hair was slightly curled and of golden colour; a scarlet shield with engraved devices and golden hoops and clasps of silver. A wide flowing purple cloak on him, with a gem-set gold brooch on his breast, and a gold torque (*o*) around his neck. A white collared shirt, embroidered with gold, upon him. And a girdle with golden buckles, and studded with precious stones, around him. Two golden net-work sandals with golden buckles upon them. Two spears with golden sockets, and many red bronze rivets, in his hand, while he stood in the full glow of beauty without defect or blemish."

The poet Kenneth O'Hartigan, who died in 973,

[1] *Pagan Ireland.*

in his poem on Tara, preserved in the book of Ballymote, gives a glowing description of Cormac and his palace:

"When Cormac was in his grandeur
Brilliant and conspicuous was his course,
No fortress was found equal to *Temar*,
It was the secret of the road to life."

Cuan O'Lochain, Chief Bard of Erin (who died in 1024) and author of the well known topographical tract, the Dinsenchas, is no less eloquent on the subject. He writes:

"Teamhair, choicest of hills,
For possession of which Erin is now devastated;
The noble city of Cormac, son of Art,
Who was the son of great Conn of the Hundred Battles,
Cormac the prudent and good,
Was a sage, a poet, a prince;
A righteous judge of the Fene-men (farmers)
Was a good friend and companion.
Cormac gained fifty battles,
He compiled the Saltair of Teamhair.
In that Saltair is contained,
The best summary of history;
It is that Saltair which assigns
Seven chief Kings to Erin of harbours
They consisted of five kings of the provinces,
The monarch of Erin and his Deputy,
In it are written on either side,
What each provincial King is entitled to
From the Kings of each great musical province
The Synchronisms and chronology of all
The Kings, with each other (one with another.)"

Cormac is said to have been the first to introduce that mode of ascertaining the dates of regal successions called Synchronism, which consists in collating the times of the respective reigns with those of contemporary princes.

He is also said by O'Flaherty (*Ogygia*) to have established three Academies at Tara; in the first of which the science of war was taught; in the second historical literature; while the third Academy was devoted to the cultivation of jurisprudence. A law tract attributed to Cormac and called the *Book of Acaill* (*þ*) from having been written at Acaill, now the Hill of Skreen, near Tara, is still preserved.

Towards the close of his career he abandoned the worship of idols, refusing to pay homage to any but the one great Creator of heaven and earth. "For I," said he, "will offer no adoration to any stock or image shaped by my own mechanic; it were more rational to offer adoration to the mechanic himself, for he is more worthy than the work of his hands." [1]

About the year 294, he was choked by a salmon bone which stuck in his throat, because, as was said he turned against the Druids, and so, as Teernagh records, "the elves destroyed him after he had been betrayed by Maelchin the wizard."

He directed that he should not be buried at Brugh

[1] *Ireland before the Conquest*, by Lady Ferguson.

na Boinne, now the famous mound known as Newgrange, or at Relig na Righ, near Croghan (*q*) in Connaught, where his ancestors were buried, but at Rosnaree on the south bank of the river Boyne near Slane, where he first had his vision of a purer religion :

"Spread not the beds of Brugh for me
When restless death-bed's use is done
But bury me in Rosnaree,
And face me to the rising sun

For all the Kings who lie in Brugh
Put trust in gods of wood and stone,
And 'twas at Ros that first I knew,
One Unseen who is God alone."

Contrary to his wishes, Cormac's captains decided to bury him in Brugh with his grandfather Conn, and Felimy the Lawgiver, and :

"Dead Cormac on his bier they laid,
He reigned a King for forty years,
And shame it were, his captains said,
He lay not with his royal peers :
His grandsire Hundred Battles sleeps
Serene in Brugh, and all around
Dead Kings in stone sepulchral keeps,
Protect the sacred burial ground."

Crossing the Boyne, according to tradition, the

coffin was swept away by the flood and deposited at Rosnaree where :

" At morning on the grassy marge,
Of Rosnaree the corpse was found,
And shepherds at their early charge,
Intombed it in the peaceful ground." [1]

Here in the sixth century, his skull was found by his descendant, St. Columbkille, who buried it, and remained in the same place until he said thirty masses for the repose of his soul. In after times a church was erected over the spot, according to Keating.

Cormac by his Queen, Ethne, daughter of Dunlang,[2] King of Leinster, son of Enna Niadh, was father of Carbery, surnamed Liffeachar, or of the Liffey, from having been fostered near that river. His two brothers, Ceallach and Daire, both died without issue :

" His brother Daire unfortunately fell,
With the renowned Thady, son of Cian,
At Dubhrois, near the river Boyne."

His two sisters, Grainia and Ailbhe, are much celebrated in Irish story. The former affianced by her father to his general, Finn, son of Cool, eloped with his lieutenant Dermod " of the white face and bright teeth." All over Ireland the lovers were

[1] *Lays of the Western Gael*, by Sir Samuel Ferguson.
[2] *Ogygia ;* Keating's *History.*

pursued by Cormac and Finn, and many Cromlechs and Druids altars are still called the "Beds of Dermod and Grainia." Dermod, after many picturesque adventures, meets his death on the mountain of Ben Bulben in Co. Sligo, from the tusks of a wild boar, which still figures as the cognizance of the Duke of Argyle—head of the Clan Campbell—who claims to be of Dermod's race of the line of Ith. Finn then wedded Ailbhe and after her death Grainia, after whom Rath Grainia at Tara was called.

Carbery succeeded Eochy Gunnat, an Ulster prince, who ascended the throne A.D. 277, after Cormac's abdication; but he only enjoyed the sovereignty one year, when he was slain by Lughaid Mean, son of Aengus Finn, King of Ulster, and grandson of Fergus Black Tooth.

Carbery, like his predecessors, maintained a standing army of 9,000 men—with a reserve of 12,000—supposed to have been modelled after the fashion of the Roman Legions, and called the Fianna Erinn, or Militia of Erin.

These warriors, who had their camping ground on Ben Edar, or the Hill of Howth, were chosen for their great strength and agility, as well as for their knowledge of poetry; for Finn, their Commander, being an illustrious warrior, was a bard of note, and many of his compositions, and those of his son Ossian, are still extant. Some of the Finnian

poems, edited by John O'Daly, have been published by the Ossianic Society.

The principal leaders of the Fianna under Finn were the Clanna Baosigne,—his own relatives—descendants of his great-grandfather Baosigne; and the Clanna Morna, or descendants of Hugh M'Morna, the Firbolg Chief of Connaught, mentioned in the reign of Conn of the Hundred Battles.

Carbery favoured the latter, and in consequence of their dissensions, and the formidable degree of power which they had attained, determined on disbanding the Clanna Baosigne, who now revolted.

Having, in defence of the rights of Leinster, defeated the Munstermen in three pitched battles about the year 282, and in the following year in four, he (Carbery) demanded the Boruma from Breasal Bealach, King of Leinster, but Breasal, backed by Finn and his Fenians, refused without a battle, on which Carbery marched to Camross near Borris-in-Ossory, where he found the Lagenians accompanied by Finn and 1,500 of his champions ready to receive him.

Deserted by his best men, Carbery gave battle to Breasal, who, after a brisk engagement, defeated him with the loss of 9,000 men and his two sons Eochy and Eochy Doimlen.[1]

After this battle Finn, now an old man, retired to Rath Breagh, near the river Boyne, where, soon

[1] *The Boroma*; Teernagh's *Annals.*

after, he was killed by Athlach, a treacherous fisherman, who, fired with the love of everlasting notoriety, slew him with his gaff.

The Clanna Baosigne being disbanded and outlawed by Carbery, repaired to Munster, to Mogh Corb, King of Munster, son of Cormac Cas, and grandson of Finn, by his mother Samuir. Mogh retained them in his service contrary to the orders of Carbery, who, in consequence, prepared to invade Munster, but he was anticipated by Mogh, who, with the Fenians, advanced on Tara.

At Gavra, near the Hill of Skreen, they were met by Carbery, and a fierce engagement ensued, when the two military tribes almost exterminated each other. Carbery slew Oscar, son of Ossian, the hero-poet, and grandson of Finn, in single combat; but retiring from the combat, severely wounded, he was set upon by his relative Semeon, one of the Fotharta (or descendants of Eochy Finn Fothart) who despatched him at a blow, A.D. 295.

Carbery left a son Fiacha, surnamed Sravtene—from having been fostered at that fortress in Connaught—who succeeded his cousins, the two Fothads (sons of Lewy and grandsons of M'Niadh) in the sovereignty, A.D. 297.

Early in his reign he despatched a body of troops to assist Carausius, a Roman, said to be of Irish descent, in the Conquest of Britain.[1]

[1] *The O'Conors of Connaught.*

Carausius, appointed Count of the Saxon shore by the Emperors Diocletian and Maximian, established himself as ruler of Britain, and forced the Emperor to acknowledge his title. He fell at York by the dagger of a Briton named Alectius, who seized on the throne, but three years after he too fell in a battle with the Emperor Constantius Chlorus, when Roman ascendancy was restored.

In the sixth year of his reign, Fiacha was obliged to take the field against the Leinstermen, whom he defeated at the battle of Dublin. Soon after he routed the Ultonians at Slieve Toad, thought to be in Donegal.

In these engagements Fiacha had as general, Muredach Tirech, King of Connaught, his son by his Queen, daughter of the Prince of the Gall Gaedhal, or Gaels of the Hebrides.[1]

Towards the close of his reign he made him his heir apparent, and this so aroused the jealousy of his nephews, Hugh, Muredach, and Carol—sons of his brother Eochy Domlen—that they determined to depose him and seize the throne.

Accordingly, about the year 328, the three brothers commonly called the three Collas, *i.e.* Colla Uais, or the Noble, Colla Mean, or the Famous, and Colla da Chrioch, or Colla of the two Countries (Ireland and Scotland) collected a considerable body of troops, and when Muredach was absent

[1] O'Flaherty; Keating.

with the best part of the royal army in Munster, advanced to give battle to King Fiacha, who was then encamped at Dubhcomar, near Teltown.

Fiacha, on learning of the approach of the rebels, consulted his Druid, Dubhcomar, from whom the battle was named, and who told him that if he destroyed the Collas, the crown of Ireland would not be worn by any of his descendants, but would descend to the posterity of his rebellious nephews. Fiacha assured the Druid that he would joyfully resign his life rather than, by killing the traitors, be the means of fixing the crown upon the heads of their posterity.

Thus resolved, he drew out his forces, and fell upon the enemy, by whom he was defeated and slain, A.D. 327. Colla Uais was then proclaimed king, and held the throne four years, when he was defeated and driven from the kingdom by Muredach Tirech, who had retired to Connaught to recruit his forces, on hearing of the rebellion of the Collas, and of his father's death.

The Collas, with 300 of their followers, sought refuge with their grandfather, Updar, King of the Picts; but being informed by a Druid that if they could so exasperate King Muredach, as to make him kill one of them, the sovereignty would pass from him and his descendants, and be transferred to them, they returned some months later, and proceeding unarmed to Tara, asked to be brought before the

King, who, however, was also aware of the prophecy, as applied to his father.

The gate-keeper sent word to the palace: "The three Collas stand on the green without, what shall be done with them?" "Open the liss," said Muredach, "and enquire wherefore they come."

When brought before the King, he asked, "have ye news?" They replied, "No news can be more grievous to thee than our act in killing thy father." "We know that news already," said the King. "We are not come to ask pardon for that deed, you understand," said they insolently, "Do not trouble about that," replied the King, "for no revenge shall we take on you. If it be to excite me to kill you that you are come, it will not succeed, for I will not take that means to make men forget the infamy with which you have covered yourselves." "This is the taunt of a coward," answered the Collas. "Be not disturbed by such ideas," said the King, "and you shall have peace and a welcome." [1]

In proof of his good will he made them commanders of his army, and gave them leave to conquer for themselves, and their prosperity, a territory in Ulster, the Kings of which were continually at war with the Hy-Nials in trying to assert their rights to succeed in turn to the monarchy.

Supported by the royal troops, the brothers entered

[1] *Pagan Ireland.*

Ulster, and after a campaign lasting seven days, routed the Ultonians with great slaughter, slew their King, Ferghus, and sacked and burned his palace of Emania, so celebrated in the stories of the Red Branch Knights (*r*).

On this occasion the Collas got possession of that part of Ulster extending from Lough Erne to the River Boyne, which they called Oir-ghialla (pronounced Oreyeela) or Airghialla (*i.e.* golden hostages) because, according to the legend, when a hostage was taken from their principality he should be fettered with chains of gold.[1]

From the Collas descended the M'Donnells or M'Donalds, Marquises of Antrim, Lords of the Isles and Chiefs of Glencoe; the M'Mahons of Monaghan; the M'Guires of Fermanagh; the O'Hanlons of Orior; O'Carrols of Oriel, and O'Hegnys; M'Sheehys or Sheehys of Ballyalinan, Co. Limerick, and many other noble families, whose pedigrees will be found in O'Hart's work.

The ancient inhabitants of Ulster, namely, the Clanna Rory or descendants of Rory More, King of Ulster of the line of Ir; and the Dal Fatachs or descendants of Fatach Finn, of the line of Heremon (who succeeded Feredach the Just) were ultimately driven into the Co's Down and Antrim, to which the ancient appelation—Uladh, Ulidia, or Ultonia—was applied up to a late period.

[1] *Irish Names*

The Ulidian King, Calvagh, son of Crun, was still strong enough to contest the High-kingship with Muredach, whom he succeeded in defeating and killing in an engagement at Portri, after which he gained the throne, A.D. 356; some months later however, he was overthrown by Eochy, son of Muredach, by his Queen, Murion, daughter of Fiachra, a Munster Prince.[1]

From this Calvagh, the last monarch of the line of Ir, brother of Heremon, sprang the M'Gennis's of Iveagh; the M'Artans of Kinelarty; O'Lalors, O'Loingseachs, or Lynches, and other Septs of Dal Araidhe, a territory which received its name from Fiacha Araidhe, King of Ulster, from whom Calvagh is recorded to have been the eighth in descent.

This territory, which extended from Newry to the Ravel Water, is not to be confounded with Dal Riada, which extended from the Ravel Water (in Antrim) northwards.

Of Eochy, son of Muredach, there is nothing recorded by the Annalists, save that he was troubled with a flux, and so, according to the *Annals of Clonmacnoise*, was called Eochy Moyvone (Muighmhedhoin). He died peaceably at Tara after a short reign of eight years, leaving by his Queen, Mungfionn, sister of Criffan, who succeeded him in Tara, four sons: Brian, Fiachra, Fergus,

[1] *Silva Gadelica.*

and Olioll, who settled in Connaught, which appears to have been wrested from the Firbolgs by Cormac M'Art, and which, according to O'Curry (*Manners and Customs*) received its name, Conn-acht, or Connaught, from his grandfather Conn.

Hugh, son of Eochy, and grandson of Conal of Cruachan, who was defeated by Cormac, at Magh Ai, in the tenth year of his reign, appears to have been the last Firbolg King of that territory, which was now divided between the above-mentioned sons of Eochy, from whom the great families of Connaught—the O'Conors, O'Flahertys, M'Dermotts, M'Donaghs, O'Rorkes, O'Reillys, etc.—derived their pedigrees.

By his second wife,[1] Carinn Cas Duv, or Carinn of the Black Locks, a Saxon Princess, whom he had taken captive in one of his expeditions, he was father of Niall, or Nial, of the Nine Hostages, of whose line we treat.

[1] *Ogygia*; Teernagh; Keating, etc.

PEDIGREE

SHOWING THE

Descent of the High-kings of the House of O'Neill from Heremon to Feredach the Just, *from* O'Flaherty's *Ogygia;* Keating's *History of Ireland;* and the *Annals of the Four Masters.*

HEREMON,—King of Ireland, A.M. 2935-48.
|
IRIAL FAIDH,—King of Ireland, A.M. 2951-61
|
ETHRIAL,—King, A.M. 2961-81.
|
FOLLAC.
|
TIGHERNMAS,—King, A.M. 3011-34.
|
EIONBIOTHAD.
|
SMIORGALL.
|
FIACHA LABHRAINE or Of the river Lavran,—King A.M. 3105-29.
|
ÆNGUS OLMUCHADA or Enos of the Large Hand, King 3150-68.
|
MAEN.
|
ROITHEACHTAIGH,—King of Ireland, 3192-3203.
|
DEMAN.
|
DIAN.
|

SIRNA SAEGALACH, or the Long Lived,—King 3360-81.

OLIOLL OLCHAIN.

GILLOCAIDH.

NUADHAT FIN FAIL,—King, 3410-23.

ÆDHAM GLAS.

SIMON BREAC,—King 3467-73.

MURCHAD BOLGRACH,—King, 3481-82.

FIACHA TOLGRACH.

DUACH LADHRACH, *i.e.*, the Vindictive,—King 3568-78.

EOCHAID BUADACH, or the Victorious.

UGAINE MORE,—King of Ireland and of the Western Isles of Europe, 3619-49, married Ceasair Cruthach, daughter of the King of France.

COBTHACH CAOL BREAGH, or Coffey the Slender, of Bregia, King 3668-85. Slain at Din-Righ or the Hill of the King's, Co. Carlow, by his brother Leary Lorc, ancestor of the Leinstermen.

MELGHE MOLBHTACH, or the Praiseworthy, King, 3696-3708.

IREREO, King 3721-27.

CONLY CÆMH, or the Comely, King, 3734-38.

OLIOLL CASFHIACLACH, or Of the Crooked Teeth, King, 3738-63.

EOCHAID Of the Long Hair, King, 3768-75.

ÆNGUS TUIRMEACH TEAMRACH, *i.e.*, of Tara, King. 3787-3819. "He left two goodly sons Enna Ayneagh and Fiagha Firwara. The most part of the Kings of Ireland descend from his son Enna, and the Kings of Scotland for the most part descend from Fiagha, so as the great houses of both Kingdoms trace their descent from them." — *Anls. Clonmac.* Carbery Riada, grand-son of Conn of the Hundred Battles, who descended from Fiagha, was as mentioned in the preceding pages, the ancestor of the Dal Riads, from whom the Scottish Kings traced their descent.

ENNA AYNEAGH, or the Hospitable, King, 3831-51.

LABRAIDH LORC, or the Fierce.

BEOTACT

BLATACT

ESSAMON of Emania.

ROIGNEN RUADH, or the Red.

FIN FINLOGHA, married Finnia, daughter of Crimthan, by whom he was father of Eochy Feidlioch.

EOCHAID FEIDLIOCH, or Eochy of the Constant Sighs, King, 3922-34, married Crofinna, daughter of Artur, son Uellthan, by whom he was father of Fin Eamhna, and Mab, Queen of Connaught, for whom he built the palace of Croghan, and who is still remembered as the Queen of the Irish Fairies. *See* Keating.

FIN EAMHNA.

LEWY of the Red Circles (Scriabh nDearg), King, A.M. 4015 and A.D. 65-73. "He betook himself to his own sword and died of grief for his wife, Derb-forgaill who was gone."—Teernagh. She was a Danish princess.

CRIMTHAN NIANAR, or Criffan, the Champion of Nar, King, A.D. 74-90. Some say he was killed by a fall from his horse, but according to the *Leabhar Gabhla* (quoted by O'Donovan), which contains a poem of seventy-two verses ascribed to Criffan himself, he was slain by the Attacotti. He married Nairi, daughter of Loich, son of Darletus, King of the Irish Picts, by whom he was father of Feredach, the Just. Criffan lived at Dun-Criffan, the site of which is now occupied by the Bailey Lighthouse on the Hill of Howth.

NOTES.

(*a*) Part of an ancient tract on the Gaelic language, ascribed to Fenius is preserved in the Books of Lecan and Ballymote. Dr. Hyde, in his *Literary History of Ireland*, discusses the question of the origin of the Milesians at length. Nennius, the Briton, the author of the *Historia Britonum*, who lived in the 8th century, says the Irish told him they reached Ireland from Spain 1002 years after flying from Egypt.

(*b*) See Chapter V. for an account of the Biataghs or keepers of houses of hospitality.

(*c*) Ugaine the Great was fostered by Queen Macha of the Red Hair, who founded Ard-Macha (Armagh), and built the palace of Emania. Ugaine "after he had been full forty years King of Ireland and of the whole west of Europe as far as Muir Toirrian (Tyrrhenian Sea) was slain by Babhchadh," his brother, in Bregia (*Four Masters*). He left twenty-two sons and three daughters, among whom he divided Ireland into twenty-five parts, a division which continued for 300 years afterwards. The names of these territories, and the children to whom they were allotted, are given in all our ancient MSS. Only two of his sons left issue, namely, Leary the Fierce, and Cofley the Slender of Bregia from whom all that survive of the race of Heremon are descended. *See* Keating's *History of Ireland*.

(*d*) See Chapter V. for Brehons.

(*e*) Moran is said to have received his chain from the Apostle Paul, according to a legend in the Book of Ballymote. Vallancey in his *Collectan. Hibern.* describes a golden collar or breast-plate found in a bog in Co. Limerick in his time which he believes to be the Idh Moran. "It is made of thin plated gold and chased in a very neat and workmanlike manner."

(*f*) The last Fair was held by King Roderic O'Conor in the twelfth century, when the horses and chariots alone extended in a continuous line from Tailtin to the Hill of Lloyd, a distance of more than six miles. *See* Dr. Joyce's *Social History*.

(*g*) The eric or price of a life was similar to the Anglo Saxon *weregild*. See Chapter. V.

(*h*) Baine, according to *Silva Gadelica*, married secondly (?) Sualtach, son of Baosigne, son of Nuadhat the Snow White, King of Leinster, by whom she was mother of Cool, Captain of the Fenians to Conn of the Hundred Battles. Scal Balbh is an alias like Mogh Nuadhat (*i.e.*, Nuadhat's Slave) whose real name was Eoghan More.

(*i*) Cu Corb was the great great grandfather of Cahir More, King of Leinster, in whom, as remarked, the pedigrees of the

Leinstermen converge. He is said by the Annalists to have succeeded Felimy the Lawgiver, but that is obviously a mistake, as a reference to the pedigrees of the Leinstermen will show. He flourished in the fourth century.

(*j*) Fintan, according to the legend, was one of those who came to Ireland with the lady Cesara, "forty days before the flood." He survived that great catastrophe and lived for many generations afterwards. He was transformed from time to time into the shapes of various animals till at length he became a salmon and finally made his appearance as a man in the sixth century. Before he died for the last time he gave a long account of the history of Ireland to St. Finnian of Moville.

(*k*) *See* Joyce's *Social History* for some particulars of these roads.

(*l*) Sawe, by Olioll, had three sons: Eoghan More, Cormac Cas and Cian. From them sprang the O'Briens, M'Carthys, O'Sullivans, O'Keefes, O'Callaghans, Mac Namaras, Clancys, O'Carrolls, O'Meaghers, O'Haras, O'Garas, etc.

(*m*) From Cian the O'Conors of Cian-acht in Tyrone, as well as the Cianacht of Bregia took their tribe-name. The O'Carrolls of Ely, the O'Haras and O'Garas traced their pedigree to Cian.

(*n*) Well of Nemnach, *i.e.*, the bright or sparkling well.

(*o*) Many of these gold torques are now to be seen in the Dublin Museum. Two of the largest were found in 1810 in a mound at Tara. Ireland was noted in ancient times for its wealth in gold. How much wealthier was Ireland than Great Britain, may be inferred from the fact that while the collection in the British Museum of pre-historic gold from England, Scotland and Wales together amounted a few years ago to some three dozen ounces, that in the R.I.A. Collection in the Dublin Museum, which contains only a small part of the finds made in Ireland, weighs 570 ounces.—Hyde's *Literary History of Ireland.*

(*p*) *See* Chapter V.

(*q*) Relig na Righ, *i.e.*, the burial-place of the kings, near Cruachan in Roscommon, covers about two acres, and contains numerous sepulchral monuments. Here the High-kings were interred down to the reign of Crimthan Nia Nar, who, at his wife's request, chose the great De Danaan cemetery of Brugh, which extends along the river Boyne for nearly three miles. Brugh is considered the most remarkable pagan cemetery in Europe. In Keating's *History* there is a long poem on the Kings buried at Croghan and Brugh, by Torna, Bard of Nial of the Nine Hostages. *See* also Joyce's *Social History.*

(*r*) *See* note, Chapter IX.

CHAPTER II.

NIAL OF THE NINE HOSTAGES AND HIS SON EOGHAN, KING OF AILEACH,—A.D. 379 TO 480.

IAL, surnamed Naoighiallach, or, Of the Nine Hostages, and also Nial More, or the Great, succeeded to the throne on the death of King Criffan a descendant of Olioll Olum, and head of the race of Heber, who died without issue on his way to Munster, at Sliabh-Oighidh-an-righ, *i.e.*, the Mountain of the death of the King, now the Cratloe Mountains, north of the city of Limerick.

According to the Books of Lecan and Ballymote he was poisoned by his sister Mongfionn in the hope that her favourite son Brian would immediately succeed to the monarchy; and the more to recommend the dose to the King, she tasted of it herself, which dispatched her at Inis Dornglas. And, it is remarked, from the death of Ailill or Olioll, son of Dathi, none of her descendants ever gained the crown, save Tirlo More O'Conor, and his son Roderic, who were luckless monarchs to Ireland.

The Adventures of the Sons of Eochaid Muighmhedhoin, contained in the former work (*a*), and from which the following extracts are taken, gives the story of Nial's birth, education, and succession to the throne at length.

Nial's mother, "Cairenn Casdub, daughter of Scal, the Dumb, King of England," had been taken captive, it says, by his father Eochy, whose queen was Mongfionn, by whom he had several sons older than Nial. When Nial was born the jealous queen had him conveyed out of the palace of Tara, and exposed on the green side of the hill, where he was taken up by the celebrated Munster poet, Torna, brother of Moghconn, ancestor of O'Conor Kerry. Torna "took the boy into his bosom, and to him was revealed all that would be hereafter, and he said: 'Welcome the little guest; he will be Nial of the Nine Hostages. In his time he will redden a multitude. Plains will be greatened, hostages will be overthrown, battles will be fought. Longside of Tara; host leader of Magh Femin (*b*); custodian of Maen Magh. Revered one of Almain, veteran of Liffey, Whiteknee of Codal (?). Seven and twenty years he rules Erinn, and Erin will be inherited from him for ever.'"

So Torna brought him to his residence at Ui Torna (in which is situated Abbey O'Dorney), in Kerry, where he nurtured and educated him and

afterwards brought him to Tara and presented him to his father and his friends.

The beauty and promise of the youth at once attracted the attention of Eochy. Whereupon "Anger seized the queen for that seemed evil to her." She then said to Eochy: "Pass judgment among thy sons as to which of them shall receive thy heritage." He answered: "I will not pass judgment, but Sitchenn the Wizard will do so."

Then one day the king happened to find his sons together at the forge of Sitchenn, his chief sword-smith, and a "wise man, and wonderful prophet," and the smith unknown to the princes set fire to the forge, and called upon them to save his property: "Nial came out carrying the anvil and its block. 'Nial vanquishes,' says the wizard, 'and he shall be a solid anvil forever;' Brian next came bringing the sledge hammers. 'Brian to your fighters,' says the wizard. Then came Fiachra bringing a pail of beer and the bellows, 'your beauty and your science with Fiachra,' says the wizard. Then came Ailill with the chest in which were the weapons, 'Ailill to avenge you,' says the wizard. Last came Fergus with a bundle of withered wood and a bar of yew therein. 'Fergus the withered,' says the wizard. That was true, for the seed of Fergus was no good except one Cairnech Dergain of Clonburren (*c*). And hence is the saying *a stick of yew in a bundle of firewood.*"

Of this the poet sang:

"Eochaid's five sons, Nial the great anvil,
Brian the sledge hammer for true striking.
Ailill the chest of spears, against a tribe,
Fiachra the blast, Fergus the withered.

Fiachra has the drink of ale,
Ailill has the warlike spears,
Brian has the entrance to battle,
(but) Nial has the reward."

Nial was accordingly declared heir to his father, which seemed so grievous to Mongfionn that she proposed to her sons to kill him, and said: "Do ye four sons quarrel so that Nial may come to separate you, and then kill him." Then they quarrelled; "I would fain sunder them," says Nial. But Torna said: *Let the sons of Mongfionn be peaceful.* Hence the proverb. Then they repaired to Sitchenn and asked for arms, and the finest weapon he gave to Nial and said: "Now go to hunt and try your weapons." And so they went, and it came to pass that they wandered astray; and they kindled a fire and broiled some of their quarry and ate it until they were satisfied. Then they were thirsty and Fergus went to seek for water till he chanced on a well and saw an old woman guarding it: "Art thou guarding the well," says Fergus. "Yea truly," she answers. "Dost thou permit me to take away some of the water?"

says he. "Not," she answers, "without a kiss." "I would rather perish with thirst than give thee a kiss," he rejoined.

One after another the brothers went to the well, but none of them could make up their minds to kiss the old crone till Nial came; and he said he would kiss her willingly for all, she was so ugly.

Then when Nial bent down to kiss her, she was suddenly transformed into a beautiful maiden; and "there was not in the world a damsel whose gait or appearance was more lovable than hers, like the end of snow in trenches was every bit of her from head to sole. Plump and queenly forearms she had. Fingers long and calves straight and beautifully coloured." "That is many shaped, O lady," says Nial. "True," quoth she. "Who art thou?" says he. "I am the Sovranty," she answered, and then she said:

> "O King of Tara, I am the Sovranty
> I will tell thee its great good," etc.

"Go now to thy brothers," she says, "and take the water with thee and the hostages and the domination of Erin will for ever abide with thee and with thy children. . . . Howbeit give not the water to thy brothers, until they make gifts to thee, to wit, seniority over them."

"So shall it be done," says the lad, and he bade her farewell and took the water to his brothers,

but he did not give it to them until they had granted him every boon that he asked of them, and he also bound them by oath never to oppose himself or his children.

Then they returned to Tara and related their adventures, and told what the woman had prophesied. "What is the cause," says Mongfionn, "that it is not the senior, Brian, that is telling these tales." They answered, "we granted our seniority and our kingship to Nial, for the time, in lieu of the water." "Ye have granted it permanently," says Sitchenn, "for hence he, and his children, will a ways have the domination and kingship of Erin."

When Nial succeeded he made Brian his Commander-in-chief, and permitted him to acquire the Kingship of Connaught (*d*); but he soon found another rival in his foster brother Corc, King of Munster, who boasted of his intention to put forth his right to the monarchy and to enforce that right by force of arms. Nial, as soon as he heard of Corc's designs, immediately mustered his forces, and vowing that he would reduce him to more becoming obedience, prepared to march into Munster.

Torna then presented himself to Corc, and entreated him to let him proceed to Tara to heal the wounded pride of Nial, and dissuade him from entering Munster.

This request being granted, Torna went forth to

meet Nial, whom he found, at the head of his men, ready for action. In reply to Torna's pleadings he said:—"Wherefore does he demand the royal residence of Conn's descendants, to whom the sceptre is not due, at the expense of the blood of Ireland." Torna answered: "He does not require that, and perhaps if he does, I say the line of Munster is more powerful in deeds than in words. The offspring of Conn charges him with levity, a youth bombastic and lofty in his language as is his custom. Truly the Court of (Corc, son of) Lugaid ought to be reprobated, for its mode of hospitality, but not his family, than which there is none more illustrious." Says Nial: "He was not like me in our youth, he to Bacchus was devoted, I to my books, let him come and take, such is his blind ambition, the walls of Temor from the race of Prince Conn." After due consideration he decided to march into Munster and at the head of nine battalions he advanced to Lothra in Tipperary where he pitched his camp and ravaged all the surrounding territory. Torna was then sent to Corc to call upon him to come in and deliver hostages, before the army proceeded further; and Corc, who was then at the head of his army at a place now known as the Devil's Bit, finding himself compelled to submit, rode at the head of 500 horsemen to Nial's camp, where he was joyfully received, and peace was restored, after which Corc returned

to Cashel, leaving hostages in the hands of Nial, and receiving from him 1000 horses, 500 suits of armour, nine score rings of gold and fifty costly drinking-horns.[1]

Altogether Nial received from his enemies nine hostages. According to O'Clery's *Glossary* he got five from the provinces; and also "French, Saxon, British, and Alban hostages;" hence his surname, Naoighiallach, or Of the Nine Hostages.

"Nial the martial hero of the Irish,
The son of the renowned Eochaid,
By force of arms and military skill
Subdued the rebels who opposed his right;
And, as a pledge of their allegiance,
Detain'd five hostages of noble blood;
And to secure the homage of the Scots
He kept confin'd four hostages of note,
Hence this prince the ancient records call
The hero of the Nine Hostages."[2]

Nial, as soon as peace was restored at home, at the request of the Irish Dalriads led an army against the Picts; and obliged them to surrender Cantire and Argyll to his countrymen, at whose request he changed the name of Alba to that of Scotia Minor, as distinguished from Ireland, called Scotia Major, in honour of Queen Scota, wife of Milesius. Having appeased the troubles in Alba, he entered Britain and ravaged the whole country,

[1] O'Curry's *Manners and Customs; Ogygia.*
[2] Keating's *History.*

A.D. 388. He then embarked for Armoric Gaul, whence he brought considerable booty, with 200 captives, one of whom was afterwards St. Patrick, Apostle of Ireland, who was then in his sixteenth year.[1]

In the seventeenth year of his reign Nial, observing that the Romans had retired to the eastern shore of Britain, collected a great fleet, and ranging along the whole coast of Lancashire, effected a landing in Wales, carried off immense plunder, and made Britain his tributary province, and though he was ultimately forced to retreat by the Roman general, Stilicho, he left marks of ruin and depredation wherever he passed. On this occasion the poet Claudian, when praising Stilicho, says of him in the person of Britannia: "By him was I protected when the Scot (*i.e.*, Nial) moved all Ireland against me and the ocean foamed with their hostile oars." The ancient Irish accounts of these expeditions are on the whole corroborated by the Roman historians.[2]

About this time, as appears from a poem ascribed to Flann of Monasterboice, Eoghan, or Owen, son of Nial, with his brothers, Conal Gulban, Cairbre, and Enda, to revenge the death of Conal's foster-father, Fiach of Ben Gulban, led an army against the men of North Connaught and the Clan Colla

[1] M'Geoghegan's *History of Ireland.*
[2] Joyce's *History of Ireland;*

of Ulster, from whom they conquered the best part of their territory.[1]

Another poem by an O'Donnell bard, given in the *Book of Fenagh* represents the discussion which took place between Eoghan and Conal as to the division of the conquered territory. It commences:

"Listen ye to the mighty Conal
And to illustrious Eoghan,
How they effected their arrangement
On the top of Cruachan's ridge.

"The guileless Eoghan said:
'Make a division for us, O Conal,
Twixt troopful Carbery of the preys
And the warlike Enna.'"

Conal's territory, to which he gave his name of Cinel Conal, or Tir Conal, is described as extending from Ros Guill in the north of Donegal, east of Sheep Haven, to Eas Ruaidh, or Ballyshannon.

Eoghan or Owen, with whose career we are chiefly concerned, acquired the territory afterwards from him called Tir-Eoghan, *i.e.*, the land of Eoghan or Tyrowen, which, not including Clannaboy, comprised the present counties of Londonderry and Tyrone with the Baronies of Raphoe (in which Enna's descendants, the Cinel Enna, settled), and Inis-Eoghain (*i.e.*, the Island of Eoghan) now

[1] O'Curry's *Manners*, etc.

Inisowen or Inish-Owen in Donegal; and parts of the neighbouring counties of Fermanagh, Monaghan, and Armagh (*e*).

Eoghan had his chief seat at the fortress of Aileach Neid in the peninsula of Inishowen, which he appears to have inherited from his ancestors, and from which he and his descendants received their title of King.

"Prince Eoghan through many conflicts dire attained
at length the throne
And stamped his name for ever on the realms he called
his own."[1]

Of these important events in the reign of Nial, and of his expeditions and many battles, there is little or nothing recorded by the annalists.

In the *Boruma* it is stated that, having been worsted by Enna Censeallagh, great greatson of Cahir More, King of Leinster, in thirteen battles, he at length gained the day, and received hostages including Eochy, son of Enna himself.

Eochy, however, succeeded in making his escape from Tara soon after, and took his way in the direction of his own country.

On his journey, hungry and exhausted, he called at the house of Laidcend, son of Barced, Nial's chief bard, to obtain some food, which on being refused, he afterwards returned with some of his

[1] *Derriana*, by Most Rev. Dr. O'Doherty.

followers, and burned the poet's house, his only son being killed in the attack.

In revenge the poet continued to satirize the Lagenians for the space of a whole year and, according to the belief of the time, by his satires to bring fatality upon them so that neither corn nor foliage could grow.

Not satisfied with this, he urged Nial to avenge his wrongs as that of the whole order to which he belonged (and which was by law privileged against personal violence).

Nial at last complied with his entreaties, and marching his armies into Leinster, he encamped at Tulach O'Felemdha, now Tullow, Co. Carlow, laying waste the country all around until the Leinstermen were obliged to deliver up Eochy, who was handed over to Laidcend.

The poet, intending that he should die a lingering death, had him chained by the neck to a hole in the top of a perpendicular stone 12 feet high, which,—now known as the Cloc a Phoill or "Hole Stone"—is still to be seen in the district of Ahade, two miles south of Tullow.

Thinking he might escape, the poet changed his mind, and brought nine soldiers from the camp to despatch him; but Eochy, perceiving their intention, by a desperate effort succeeded in freeing himself; and being a man of great strength and bravery he fell upon the soldiers with the chain and

having killed some and disabled others, he made his escape to the camp of the Lagenians who were near, and who, on seeing him once more at liberty, pressed on with him to Nial's camp, which they suddenly entered, spreading confusion and slaughter on all sides.

Nial himself was forced to fly north, and to quit the province; but returning at the head of another army he overran the whole country, never stopping till he reached the mouth of the river Slaney in the Bay of Wexford, on the shore of which he encamped.

Seeing the state to which the country was reduced Laidcend begged of Nial to stay his hand; but besought him to order Eochy to come into his (Laidcend's) presence on the other side of the river.

This was done accordingly, and immediately the poet had him deprived of his arms, he began to reproach and abuse him bitterly, when suddenly Eochy, drawing from his bosom a liic curad, or champion's flat stone, hurled it at him with all his force, and striking him on the forehead killed him on the spot. He then fled to Scotland, where he received protection from Loarn, King of that country.[1]

Some time after, Nial's half brothers, Brian, King of Connaught, and Fiachra, quarrelled, with the result that a fierce battle was fought between

[1] O'Curry's *Manners*, etc.

them, in which Fiachra was taken prisoner and handed over as a hostage to Nial.

After this, however, Fiachra's son Dathi, a warlike youth, aided by Crimthan, son of Enna Censealagh (and brother of Eochy), King of Leinster, waged war on Brian and challenged him to a pitched battle.

Brian, accepting the challenge, marched to Damh-Cluain, not far from Knockma Hill near Tuam. Here he was utterly routed, and pursued to Tulcha Domhnaill, where he was overtaken and slain by the King of Leinster, Criffan or Crimthan.

Nial now set Fiachra at liberty, and gave him the kingship of Connaught with the command of his army, which, according to the *Tribes and Customs of Hy Fiachra*, edited by O'Donovan, he held for twelve years, when he was succeeded by his son Dathi. From Fiachra, his descendants,—the O'Dowds, O'Clerys, O'Shaughnessys, O'Heynes, etc., —took their tribe-name of Hy Fiachra.(*f*).

In 405 Nial, encouraged by his successes abroad, determined to invade France and "take the hostages of Italy." Accordingly he raised a great army, and sent a commission to Gavran, general of the Dalriads, to follow him with his choicest troops.

Marching through France, he encamped on the banks of the Loire, near the Alps, where he was joined by Gavran with his Scots. With him came Eochy, the exiled King of Leinster, and one day when Nial sat conspicuous on an eminence on the

bank of the river conversing with his officers, Eochy passed over to the opposite side unobserved, and discharging an arrow across the river, left him mortally wounded.[1]

He then escaped safely to his own country over which he reigned for many years. His descendants are known in history by the tribe-name of the Hy-Censealagh, or Kinsellagh, the Chiefs of whom were the M'Murroughs, or Kavanaghs.

Nial's body was brought home and interred A.D. 405 at Ochun, or Ocha, near Tara, where, according to Colgan (*Trias Thaum.*), his body was taken up a century later by St. Cianan of Duleek and found entire.

Torna, who survived Nial, wrote a lamentation for him alternately with his son, who opens with the lines:

> "When we used to go to the Assembly
> Along with the son of Eochaid Muighmedon,
> As yellow as shining Sobhairce was the hair
> Upon the head of the son of Cairin."

Pleased with the similitude, Torna answers:

> "My worthy son so well hast thou spoken,
> A cumhal (three cows) to it is fit to be given,
> In honour of the hair which thou hast compared,
> With the golden top of the Sobhairce."

He then describes his eyebrows, his eyelashes and eyes, comparing them in colour with certain berries of the wood. The son replies by describing

[1] *Idem.*

his cheeks, comparing them with the opening blossoms of certain trees. Torna next describes his pearly teeth and bold lips, his countenance like the sun, like a glowing fire. The son then compares the grief of the people of Erin for Nial, with the moaning of the wind over a desert island; and says that now, when he is gone, the Saxons, the Picts, and the Gaels will roam uncontrolled in all directions.

He next bears witness to the bravery of Nial's sons, Eoghan, Leary, Enna, Fiach, Conal, and Carberry; and Torna winds up by testifying to the happiness which he and all the men of Erin enjoyed when they went to the Assembly of Tara with Nial:—

"Sad is my condition now at last,
All my relatives have passed away,
In bitter grief for Corc and Nial." [1]

Another version of this lament for Corc and Nial is given in Hardiman's *Irish Minstrelsy*, by John Dalton:

"Oh! let me think in age
Of years rolled by,
When in the peace of infancy,
'Mid all the ties of holy fosterage,
The future lords of Erin's doom
With smiles of innocent and unambitious play
Passed the rapid hours away:
The royal children of my heart and home,
Nial, the heir of hundred-battled Conn
And Corc, of Eoghan More, the not less glorious son.

[1] *Idem.*

"Years passed, my plumy eaglets grew,
Their deeds were blazoned far.
O'er many a land with Nial victory flew,
But Corc he never met in war.
Albania bowed to Nial's bands.
His sword has waved o'er foreign lands;
Yet great as all his glories were,
They had been Corc's had he been there.
The eye of heaven ne'er looked on one
So god-like in the field as Tara's lord,
Save him—the comrade of his youth alone—
Brave Corc, terrific wielder of the sword."

Nial by his first wife, Righnach, daughter of Medabh, son of Ross M'Trithem, was father of Leary and Conal Crimthan, Fiacha and Maine.

By his second, Inea, or Ineachtfee, daughter of Dubtach, son of Moindach or Monach, King of Ulidia (son of Lugaid Mean, King of Ulster, son of Aengus Finn, King of Ulster, son of Fergus of the Black Tooth, King of Ireland), he had Eoghan or Owen, Conal Gulban, Carbery, and Enda Fin or the Fair.[1]

Altogether he had fourteen sons, of whom only the above eight left issue.

Nial's posterity, O'Flaherty says, established the monarchy on so firm a basis that almost all the succeeding Kings of Ireland descended from him, besides many noble families and illustrious princes of these families. Also nearly 300 of his

[1] *Silva Gadelica; Ogygia.*

posterity, remarkable for the sanctity of their lives and their extensive learning, have been enrolled on the catalogue of the Saints.

From the first four sons who remained in Meath, sprang the Hy Nials of the South. From the latter the more celebrated Hy Nials of the North. Generally, though not always, the Kings of Ireland were elected alternately from the Northern and Southern Hy Nials.

EOGHAN, KING OF AILEACH.

The Chief of the Northern Hy Nials acquired, as we have said, the territory of Aileach, with the fortress of that name, situated on the hill of Greenan, about four miles north-west of the city of Derry, and overlooking the Loughs Foyle and Swilly, and the valley of Inishowen :

" She sits evermore like a queen on her throne,
And smiles on the valley of green Inishowen."

Dr. Petrie in the Ordinance Memoir of Londonderry, or Colby's *Survey of Londonderry* as it is also called, gives a minute description of the ruins, with engraved plans of the structure, its entrances, stony remains and surroundings. (*g*).

From the Derry side the ascent to the ruin is gradual for about a mile. Within a few hundred yards of the top it rises more abruptly and at last shows the shapes of three concentric ramparts

round a cashel or keep in the midst. The ramparts, of which the remains are nearly obliterated, seem to have been formed of earth mixed with stones. The outer circle encloses a space of about five acres; the second, four; third, about one acre; and the cashel, which has a diameter of 77 feet, encloses a space of one rood.

There are traces of a broad road running through the ramparts, and leading to the central part of the cashel, but only the foundation of its walls remain.

From what has been elsewhere observed in Ireland —especially at Emania—it has been concluded that there were other ramparts, or terraces, formerly encircling the summit. That girdling system in the building of palaces is an Oriental one, and Heredotus tells us that the royal fortalice of Ecbatana, was surrounded by seven turreted rings of masonry, one within, and one above the other.

The Cashel up to the year 1874, was in a state of dilapidation, till Dr. Bernard of Fahan with the assistance of some neighbouring farmers made an attempt at the restoration of the stones, with the result, that at the present day the ruins (as a relic) are in a very fair state of preservation. The wall, made of uncemented but neatly adjusted stones, is of an average thickness of thirteen feet; and its height is calculated to have been about 17.

It is not quite perpendicular, the interior having an inward curve to the top.

On the interior face, about five feet from the base, the thickness is diminished by about 2 feet 6 inches by a terrace, ascent to which is gained by two stairs which increase in breadth as they ascend. These stairs are on each side of, but at unequal distances from the entrance gate.

The gate, of which there is only one to the cashel, was flagged with stones and is four feet three inches in width. Only four feet of the jambs remain, but its height is estimated to have been about six feet.

Running from the entrance gate, but not opening out to it, on each side, are galleries within the walls, extending round half the circuit of the Cashel, and having entrances in the interior.

These galleries are about five feet in height, and have sloping sides, being two feet two inches at the base, and one foot eleven inches at the top. They are roofed with very large stones and were probably used as storerooms.

Within the Cashel may be seen the remains of a little chapel, built for divine service in the Penal times, and which, according to Dr. Petrie, was in use up to the beginning of the last century.

About forty years ago a spring well was discovered near the second rampart, which, no doubt, served as a tank for the garrison.

Many ancient histories of Aileach in prose, and verse, are still preserved; and that by Eochy O'Ceirin, written in the 11th century, and contained in the topographical work called the Dinseanchus, is translated in the Ordinance Memoir. It reads:

"Eoghan, the son of Nial, with the strength of a hero
from the size of a child,
Countenance in which shone hospitality, the fair man
of Foyle,
Ineachtfee (grand) daughter of King Monach was the
mother of Eoghan,
He with the valour of royal Neid, with the resolution
of a hero, the strength of a lion.
The Kinel Owen, nobles fair, tribe of Temor,
On whose fingers are rings, beautiful, loose.
The noblest host in Erin is the meeting of Aileach;
They are the best and most honourable at their houses:
Seventeen monarchs ruled over Erin of grace;
They defended their right against foreigners;
By them are received the hostages of each country
through which they pass."

From Aileach, Eoghan (or Owen) and his descendants, the Chiefs of the Kinel Owen, received their title of King, and here they chiefly resided till the beginning of the 12th century.

Of the history of the fortress prior to Eoghan's time, comparatively little is known; but from what we do know, it may be reckoned the most ancient,

if not the most celebrated, of all the royal palaces of Ireland.

Here Itha, uncle of Milesius, when he came to spy out the land, found, according to Keating, the De Danaan princes, whose ancestor Neid, son of Indai, is credited with its erection.

On the neighbouring plain, Itha, according to the same authority, in his retreat was overtaken and slain, whence Magh Itha (*i.e.*, Itha's Plain), the name it was subsequently known by.

For centuries after the Milesian invasion Aileach appears to have been neglected.

Eochy the Victorious, father of Ugaine the Great, according to the above poem, resided there, as well as his descendants, Eochy of the Constant Sighs, and his brother, Eochy the Grave Digger.

About 120 A.D., Ptolemy of Alexandria, in his Greek work on Geography, laid down a sketch of Ireland on which Aileach is marked as a royal residence.

Two centuries later, Fiacha Sravtene is said to have presented it to Frigrinn, a Scottish chief, who, according to the legend, eloped with Aileach, daughter of Fobtaire, King of Scotland, or Pictland.

There is a deal of truth in this legend, which was apparently invented to account for the name—Aileach Frigrinn—for Fiacha's younger brother, Eochy Domlen, is said to have resided there, and according to the pedigrees he married Alechia

daughter of Updar (or Obtaire) King of Pictland or Alba, by whom he was father of the three Collas.

From Eochy, Aileach passed to his grand-nephew Eochy Moyvone, the grandfather of Eoghan, so that it is pretty clear that from the earliest times Aileach —with the adjoining teritory, to which he gave his name of Inis-Eoghan or Inis-Owen — was possessed by the Hy Nial Kings, his ancestors.*

At Aileach he entertained St. Patrick, who arrived in Ireland in the fourth year of the reign of his brother Leary, who succeeded Dathi, Nial's nephew and successor.

In spite of fierce opposition from the Druids, the apostle appeared at Tara and preached before Leary, who, however, proved an obstinate pagan, for he said: "When Nial, my father, heard of the false prophecy (the coming of the Faith) he told me not to believe but that I should be buried in the topmost part of Tara like warlike men." "For it was the custom of the heathen," adds the *Tripartite Life*, from which the succeeding extracts are taken, "to be buried in their armour, and face to face even to the Day of Judgment."

Having received permission from Leary, Patrick proceeded to the Assembly of Tailtin "to the sons of Nial" and Maine, ancestor of the O'Caharneys or Foxes, of Teffla, believed and was baptized, but Carbery oppressed him and Patrick called him "God's Foe." From him descended the Cinel

Carbery in the now barony of Granard, Co. Longford, and the Cinel Carbery in the barony of Carbery, Co. Sligo.

Conal Criffan, the second son of Nial, received the Saint with great honour, and gave him "the stead where he was biding," and a church was built there called Domnac Patrick and "Patrick gave him a blessing, and foretold that many kings would descend from him, and many nobles and clerics." From this Conal, the O'Melaghlins, Kings of Meath, derived their pedigree.

After preaching in Leinster and Munster, he returned to Meath, and at the Hill of Ushnagh (Uisneach) he founded a cloister and "two sons of Nial came against him, namely, Fiach and Enda. Patrick said to them that their children would inhabit that cloister if he should find a welcome with them," but they expelled him. "A curse," saith the Apostle—"on the stones of Uisneach," saith Sechnell (his nephew and disciple)—"be it so," saith Patrick.

In the end Enda believed, and gave every ninth ridge of land in his territory near Ushnagh, and in Cinel Enda, in Tir Eoghan, to Patrick, together with his son Cormac, afterwards Archbishop of Armagh.[1] From Fiacha, who appears to have died a pagan, at Carn Fiacha, near Kilbeggan, sprang the M'Geoghegans of Moy Cashel and Molloys of Fircall in King's County.

[1] Cotton: *Fasti Ecclesiae Hib.*

On leaving Meath, the Apostle proceeded to visit Eoghan and his brother Conal Gulban. On his way through Connaught, we are told in the *Book of Armagh*, he rested at a certain well near the palace of Rath Croghan in Roscommon, where two daughters of King Leary were at that time being fostered and educated. Their names were Ethne the Fair and Fedelim the Ruddy, and every morning it was usual for the two to come down to the well to bathe. On this occasion, seeing Patrick and his companions dressed in their white robes praying, they greatly marvelled, and asked in a Homeric manner "Whether they were men of the Sidhe, or of the Gods."

Patrick answered—gruffly enough indeed—"'Twere better for ye to confess the true God than to be enquiring whence we came."

"Who is your God," said the elder daughter. "Where does He live—in Heaven, or on earth? Is He in the sea? In the rivers? In mountainous places and in the valleys? Has He sons and daughters? Is He rich? Is He young and beautiful or is He aged? Did many foster His son? Are His daughters dear and beauteous to men?"

These and sundry other questions were put to Patrick and answered, and he having baptized them said "I wish to consecrate you to the Son of God, the King of Glory, as ye are the daughters of an earthly King."

"We are willing," said they, "show us how we may love and possess Him in Heaven. 'Tis the desire of our hearts to see Him face to face."

"That is not possible," answered the Apostle, "without receiving the body of Christ and death."

"Surely," said they, "we would wish to die immediately in order to see and possess Christ." Their wishes were soon realised, for Patrick put them under one mantle, and on one bed, and put a blessed cloth or veil on their heads, and so they fell asleep in death, and were buried together in one coffin by the Apostle, in a graveyard called Oigeala, where their bodies await the resurrection.

From Connaught, according to the *Tripartite Life*, the saint proceeded to Ulster, and was met by Conal Gulban, whom he baptized on Sith Aeda in Tir-Hugh, with his son Fergus, "and he left a blessing on their strongholds and on their estuaries and on their churches." Then "he afterwards went into the country of Eoghan, son of Nial, over Bernas (Mor) (*h*) of Tir-Aeda into Magh Itha, and to Domnac More Magh Itha (the great church of Magh Itha) and there he left Dudubae, son of Corcran, one of his household. And Patrick said to his household, "beware lest the lion Eoghan, son of Nial, come unto you." Muredach, son of Eoghan, who was in the van of the host of soldiers, met them on the way. Sechnall was in the rear of the host of clerics. Saith Sechnall to him, "thou

shalt have a reward from me if thou prevailest on thy father to believe." "What is the reward?" saith he. "The Kingship of thy tribe shall assuredly be till Doom for thee," saith Sechnall. "I will do so," saith Eoghan. In Fid Mor (Great wood), then, Eoghan met with Patrick in the place where the flagstone is, and Eoghan believed in God and Patrick. "If thou hadst believed (while) in thy country," saith Patrick, "hostages of the Gael would have come to thee, but now hostages will not come save those that thou shalt have by virtue of thy weapons and thy onslaughts." "Not stately am I," said Eoghan: "my brothers give a great wergild for my ugliness." "What shape dost thou choose," saith Patrick. "The shape of the youth who is carrying thy box, namely, Rioc of Inisbofin" (the Isle of the White Cow). Patrick covered them in one mantle, the two arms of each of them around the other. They sleep thus, and afterwards awake with the same shape, only the tonsures being different. "My size, too, is not to my liking," saith Eoghan. "What size desirest thou?" saith Patrick. Eoghan reaches up his hand with his weapon, "I should like this," saith he. He straightaway grows that length.

Then Patrick blessed Eoghan with his sons. "Which of thy sons," saith he, "is dearest to thee." "Muredach," saith Eoghan. "Kingship shall descend from him for ever," saith Patrick. "And

after him ? " saith Patrick. " Fergus," saith Eoghan. " Ordained persons shall descend from him," saith Patrick. " And then ? " saith Patrick. " Eochu the Tuneful," saith Eoghan. " Warriors from him," saith Patrick. " And after him ? " saith Patrick. " all the rest are equally beloved by me," saith Eoghan. " One man's love shall be on them," saith Patrick.

Patrick went to Aileach of the Kings, and blessed the fortress there, and left his flagstone there (*i*) and prophesied that kings and ordained persons out of Aileach would be over Erin. " When," saith Patrick, " thou shalt put thy feet out of thy bed to approach (them) and thy successors after thee, the men of Ireland shall a-tremble before thee," now Patrick blessed the whole island (of Eoghan) from this— from Bealach Ratha ; and he bestowed a blessing of valour upon Eoghan. " Then," said Patrick :

" My blessing on the tribes,
I give from Bealach Ratha.
On you descendants of Eoghan
Graces till Doomsday.

So long as fields shall be under crops,
Victory in battle shall be on their men ;
The head of the men of Ireland's hosts to their place.
They shall attack every hill,

The seed of Eoghan, son of Nial
Sain O fair Brigit,
Provided that they do good,
Rule shall descend from them for ever,

The blessing of us both,
On Eoghan son of Nial!
On every one who shall be born of him,
Provided he be wholly according to our will."

Eochaid, son of Fiachra, grandson of Eoghan, was baptised along with him, and "Patrick's covenant was between them."

According to some, the saint, on striking down the iron end of his crozier—the Bachall Isa, or Staff of Jesus—in the earth, at Eoghan's baptism, unknowingly pierced his foot. He, thinking this was part of the ceremony, bore the pain unflinchingly till Patrick noticing that the ground was red with blood under his feet, and seeing his mistake, asked him why he had not complained. Learning the reason, and struck with wonder and admiration at his firmness, he blessed him with a particular blessing.

The Bachall Isa, said to have been given to the Apostle, Paul, by our Saviour, was preserved with great veneration at Armagh, covered with gold and precious stones, and as we go along we shall often have occasion to refer to it. In the 12th century it was forcibly removed from Armagh to Christ Church by the English, by whom it was burned with other

relics in the streets of Dublin in 1538, after it had been stripped of all its ornaments.

After leaving Aileach, Patrick, according to the *Tripartite*, went to Magh Dula in Tir Eoghan, and founded seven churches at the river Fochaine, or Faughan, namely, Domnac Dula, Domnac Senlis, Domnac Dori (Derry ?), Domnac Senchue, Domnac More (*i.e.*, the Great Church) in Cluain, Domnac Cati and Both Domnac, now Badoney, Co. Tyrone, This appears to be the only name identified.

On leaving Magh Dula, or Dula's Plain, he went to Tir-Eoghan-na-Inse, or Tyrone of the island, probably Inis-Eoghan, "that is into the territory of Fergus (son of Eoghan)." He desired that he might make a hermitage in a certain place, Achad Drumman is the name of the land in which he found it.

Caelbad, son of Fergus, son of Eoghan, expelled him thence, and Patrick said his race would not have . . . . there, which thing hath lately been proved by Conman, son of Algasach, of the race of Caelbad, who was biding in Eiss-mac n-Erc, who built a house there, and a rush of the thatch was not upon it before it was demolished by a student of the community of Domnac More Magh Tochair (the Great Church of Magh Tochair at the foot of Slieve Snaght in Inishowen). "Thou shalt have a welcome with me," said Aedh, son of Fergus.

In the territory of Ailill, son of Eoghan—Bretach,

now Bredagh in Inishowen—the Apostle left his three nephews, the Dechnans, and he ordained Aengus, son of Ailill, in Domnac Bili in that place, and rested there on the Sabbath.

From Bredagh he journeyed to Enda's territory which comprised thirty quarters of land south of Inishowen; and at Ailech Airtech he asked Enda (Eoghan's brother) to give him that place, "as if," said Enda, "we hath not clerics already."

On the morrow he brought his son Eochy, and said to Bishop Mac Cairthin of Clogher, afterwards St. Mac Cairthin: "Confer ye the rank of Bishop on my son." "That is our duty," saith the Bishop obligingly, "the rank is conferred." "Indeed," saith Patrick, "to confer that rank in my absence on the son of the wolf! There shall always be contention in the church of one of the twain of you. There shall be poverty in the dwelling of the other." "Which thing," adds the *Tripartite Life*, "is fulfilled. Contention there is in Domnac More Magh Tochair. Poverty in the latter—Clochair."

At Ard Dailing he founded the Church of Dun Cruithne "and left Bishop Bed-aed there, after making an union with him and Eoghan."

In Ciannachta in Tir Eoghan, now the Barony of Keenaght, Co. Londonderry, inhabitated by the descendants of Cian, son of Olioll Olum, he founded seven churches "and Patrick's well is there."

"There came Setna, son of Drona, son of

Tighernagh, to Patrick, who baptised him and there he blessed his wife and the child in her womb, namely Cianan of Daimliac (St. Cianan of Duleek), and he read with Patrick, and there Patrick prophecied of Cainech and said the land would be his.

After leaving Keenaght he crossed the Bann to Li, or Magh Li inhabited by the descendants of Colla Uais, and blessed the river where "up to that time men used to catch fish by night only. Then he ordered that they should catch them by day, and thus shall it be to the end of the world."

The inhabitants of this territory called the Fir Li, or men of Li, were subject to the Princes of Aileach, as well as their neighbours and co-relatives on the south-west of the river—the Hy Tuirtre. Anterior to the English invasion, according to Dr. Reeves (*Eccl. Antiq.*) the Hy Tuirtre were seated on the west of Lough Neagh and Lough Beg, adjoining the Fir Li on the south. They were afterwards forced by the Cinel Eoghan to the east side of the Bann and Lough Neagh, and gave the tribe-name—Hy Tuirtre—to the territory now known as the two baronies of Toome in Antrim. Magh Li or Fir Li is described as extending from Birr to Camus.

From Fir Li Patrick passed into Dalriada, the northern part of Antrim, where he found a welcome with the twelve sons of Erc, the ruler of that

country, and ancestor of the Scottish Kings, and soon after returned to Cinel Eoghan to complete his mission, and remained forty days.

Eoghan's brother, the monarch, Leary, according to the *Tripartite Life*, was thirty years in the realm of Ireland in conflict with Patrick, but nevertheless he did Patrick's will.

Leary's predecessor, Dathi, was the last of the High-kings to engage in foreign expeditions, as, according to an account of Leary's death, given in the *Leabhar na h Uidhre*, or Book of the Dun Cow, there existed a prophecy that he would meet his death somewhere between Eire and Alba (Ireland and Scotland) so he quite avoided the sea, and carried on his wars, like his successors, within the limits of the island.

In 457, in endeavouring to exact the Boruma, he was defeated with great slaughter by the King of Leinster, who made a cairn of the heads of the slain at Moyalve on the brink of the Barrow.

Leary himself was taken prisoner, but on swearing the old pagan oath, by the sun and moon, water and air, sea and land, that he would never again demand the Boruma, he was set at liberty.

Next year, however, insisting that this oath had been exacted by violence, he set out at the head of another great army to invade Leinster, and on his way from Tara seized a great prey of cows near the hill of Carbery at the source of the Boyne; but,

as soon as he had arrived at a place called Grellach Daphill by the side of Cassi, between the two hills called *Eire* and *Alba*, he was struck dead by the elements, for the air forsook him, the sun burned him, and the earth swallowed him, which we suppose is another way of saying that he was struck dead by lightning :

" Near Liffey's fruitful stream to death devoted,
For violating the bonds of solemn oaths."

His body was brought to Tara, and buried in the outer south-easterly dyke of Leary's royal stronghold —called from him Rath-Leary—in full battle array facing his old enemies the Leinstermen.

" On his head is the gold crown, the spear in his hand,
And he looks to the hated Lagenian land."

This was in obedience to his commands. " For," he said, " I must be buried after this fashion, namely, as the son of Dunlang was buried at Maistin (Mullaghmast) in the Plain of Life, because of the endurance of our hatred." Dunlang, King of Leinster and his son, deadly foes of Leary, were buried at Mullaghmast, Co. Kildare, near Athy, fully armed, and standing with their faces turned towards the Hy Nials.[1]

Leary (*j*) is said to have had a fortress at Kings-

[1] Joyce's *Social History of Ireland.*

town, formerly Dun Leary ; and another in Eoghan's territory, Mullagh-Rath, in Clogher, near where the idol Kerman Kelstach is said to have delivered its oracular responses :

" In Clogher once King Leary raigned
Cruelle he was and sterne ;
From Mullagh rath oft went he forth
To spoyle, to slay, to burn.

And nought his spyritte fierce could tame,
Save ye mystique voyce alone,
From Kerman Kelstach's bloudye shryne,
Where stood ye golden stone." (*k*)

On the death of Leary, Oliöll Molt, or Wether, son of Dathi, gained the throne, Eoghan and his brothers having enough to do to secure their possessions to offer serious opposition.

In 465 Conal Gulban, according to the *Book of Fenagh*, on returning from a foray into the territory of the Masraidhe, an ancient tribe of the Firbolgs, seated in the plain of Moy Sleacht, around the town of Ballymagauran in the N.W. of Cavan, was overtaken and slain at Loch Saloch, near Fenagh, Co. Leitrim, where he was buried.

Conal, according to some accounts, was Eoghan's twin brother, and on hearing of his death he is said to have been so affected that he was taken ill,

and died soon after, and was buried at Uisce Chain now Eskaheen in Inishowen :

" Eoghan, son of Nial, died
Of tears 'tis good his nature
In consequence of the death of Conal of the hard feats,
So that his grave is at Uisce Chain."

Uisce Chain is the name of an old chapel, anciently a monastery, near a beautiful well from which the name is derived ; but Eoghan's grave is not known there at present.[1]

Eoghan, whose descendants, before the adoption of surnames were known by the tribe-name of the Cinel Eoghan, according to M'Firbis, left ten sons, 1. Muredach ; 2, Fergus, father of Bishop Fiachra and ancestor of the O'Conors of Magh Itha in the southern part of the barony of Raphoe in Donegal ; 3, Ailill or Olioll, ancestor of the Cinel or Muintir Kelly, according to O'Flaherty ; 4, Felim *a quo* O'Dubhdiorma (anglicised Dermody, McDermott, etc.), who held the eastern half of the barony of Inishowen ; 5, Eochy Binne, or the Tuneful, from whom sprang the Cinel Eochy (or O'Kellys), and the Cinel Binne of the Glen, of Tuath Ros, and of Loch Drochet or Lake of the Bridge, all their territories lay east of Magh Itha. These were the most distinguished.

Other sons of lesser note were : Dallan, whose

[1] *Four Masters*, by O'Donovan.

daughter Crodhama married Eoghan, son of Fergus, eldest son of Loarn More, King of Dal Riada. Elland, father of Cormac, styled in pedigrees from the *Book of Leinster* (Gilbert's *Nat. MSS. of Ir.*) "Bishop Cormac"; and Echin, father of "Bishop Mane."

Muredach, the eldest son, by Indorba Finn, or the Fair, a Saxon Princess,[1] succeeded as King of Aileach and of the Cinel Eoghan, after Eoghan's death.

In his reign St. Patrick died in the territory of Uladh, now Co.'s Antrim and Down, when a contest arose between him and the Ulidians as to where the saint should be interred. His men, with the Orghillians, or descendants of the Collas, carried off his body to Armagh; but when they reached a certain river it swelled against them, so that they were unable to cross. It was then agreed that two untamed oxen should be harnessed to the bier of the Saint, and sent forth unguided; and that in the place where they halted the body should be committed to the earth.

This was done accordingly, and each party followed, as they conceived, a bier borne by oxen; but as the Cinel Eoghan and Orghillians neared Armagh, their bier and oxen mysteriously vanished, and that followed by the Ulidians rested at Dundalethglas, a fortified residence of the Chief of Ulad on which was afterwards built the Cathedral of Downpatrick.

[1] *Ogygia.*

This is the only event of note recorded in the reign of this prince save that, as appears from a poem ascribed to Flan of Monasterboice, and the *Historia Britonum*, he eloped with Erca (*l*), wife of a King of Britain—Saran—and daughter of Loarn More, first King of Scottish Dal Riada (son of Erc, and great greatson of Carbery Riada), by whom he had four sons :

"Tighernagh who ruled with bravery,
And Feredach of kingly power
Muirchertach and Main, rich in mead,
Were the sons of Erc by Muredach."

From Feredach descended the M'Cawells of Cinel Feradach, or Cinel Farry, many of whom were Bishops of Clogher. This tribe, seated in the Barony of Clogher, in Tirowen, included the following clans, namely, the Clans Aengus, Dubhinreacht, Fogarty, Hy Kennoda and Clan Colla, in Fermanagh, adjoining.

From Tighernagh descended O'Conyngham, and O'Hosey or Hussey and other families, and from Main, grandfather of St. Ernan, son of Colman, descended the Cinel Main, the Chiefs of whom—the O'Gormlys—subsequently lorded it over the Cinel Enda or descendants of Enda, Eoghan's brother ; and the men of Magh Ith, all in the barony

of Raphoe, Co. Donegal. Mongan, another son of Muredach, was ancestor of O'Donnelly.[1]

Murkertac, who appears to have been the eldest son, agreeable to a custom which then prevailed, adopted the name of his mother, and so is known in history as Murkertac M'Erca, and Murkertac More M'Erca, or Murkertac the Great M'Erca. He succeeded as King of Aileach on the death of his father in 480.

His rights and privileges as such, with the tributes which he received from his sub-chiefs, are thus set forth in the *Book of Rights*, [2] compiled early in his reign by St. Benean or Benignus, one of his own clansmen, of the tribe of the Ciannachta of Glengiven in Tir-Eoghan; and the disciple and successor of Patrick at Armagh.

THE PRIVILEGES OF THE KING OF AILEACH.

The tributes of the King of Aileach and his stipends here; and his tributes from his territories and his stipends to them.

A hundred sheep; and a hundred cloaks; and a hundred hogs; and a hundred red cows from Cuilentraidhe.

Thirty hogs; and thirty cows; and thirty wethers from Tuath Ratha (*m*).

Three hundred hogs; and three hundred cows; and 300 wethers from the men of Lurg (*n*).

[1] O'Flaherty.
[2] Edited, with notes, by O'Donovan.

Three hundred cows; three hundred beeves; a hundred tinnes from the King of Ui Fiachrach (*o*).

One hundred beeves; and one hundred cows; and one hundred hogs; and fifty cloaks from the Ui Mac Caerthinn (*p*).

Three hundred hogs; and three hundred cows; and three hundred beeves from the Ciannachta of Glen Geimhin (*q*).

One hundred milch cows; fifty cloaks; and fifty hogs from the Ui Tuirtre (*r*).

One hundred beeves; one hundred milch-cows and fifty cloaks from the men of Magh Itha.

The free Chieftainships of Oileach (*s*) *i.e.*, Tulach Og, and Craebh, and Magh Itha, and Inis-Eoghain and Cineal Chonnail: of these the learned man, namely, Benean, son of Sescnean, sang:

THE RIGHT of the King of Aileach listen ye to it,
Among the oak forests immeasurable,
He is entitled to income no trifling tribute,
From the tribes and from the Forthuata (*t*).

A hundred sheep; a hundred cloaks; a hundred cows;
And a hundred hogs are given
From Cuilentraidhe of the war,
To the king of Aileach laboriously.

Three hundred hogs from Tuath Ratha,
Three hundred cows with copious milk,
Thirty wethers in the yellow month (August),
Are due to the King of Aileach all.

Three hundred hogs from the men of Lurg,
Three hundred cows not small the wealth,
Three hundred wethers living,
To the King of Aileach of the spacious house.

There is due from the King of Ui Fiachrach,
Three hundred cows, 'tis not a promise of words;
A hundred beeves and a hundred heavy tinnes (*u*)
To the King of Febhail (*i.e.*, of Foyle, or Aileach) of the ready ships.

A hundred beeves from the Ui Mic Caerthainn;
And a hundred hogs—'tis not very trifling,
Fifty cows, a lawful tribute;
Fifty cloaks with white borders.

Three hundred hogs by which the north is replenished;
Three hundred cows to feed the host;
Three hundred beeves, wealth for war;
From Ciannachta of the abundant store,

Ten hundred milch cows from the people of Li, (*v*)
A hundred beeves, it is the award of truth;
And fifty oxen,
With fifty hogs of heavy bellies.

A hundred milch-cows from the Tuathas of Tort (*w*)
Fifty times fifty hogs;
With fifty coloured cloaks are given him,
From Dun-na-h Uidhre in one day,

A hundred beeves from the men of Magh Itha;
And a hundred milch-cows, full rich,
Fifty cloaks an award of tribute,
To the intrepid King of Aileach.

There is not due from Tulach Oge,
A tribute to the King of Feabhal of the banquets,
Because it is in its proud land is assumed
The sovereignty over the men of Erinn,

There is not due out of the Craebh (*x*)
A tribute to the King of Aileach of Comeliness
There is not due from Magh Itha,
A tribute or tax for their fair territories.

There is not due from Inis-Eoghan,
A tribute to the Chief King nor gratuity,
There is not due of the race of Conall,
A tribute or custom, or white (unwrought) wool

Those are the tributes of the King of Aileach.
No one is learned who does not know them;
No King is entitled to reign or rule,
Who does not maintain his right . . . .THE RIGHT.

THESE ARE the payments and stipends of the King of Aileach to his Chieftainries and tribes for refection and escort.

The King of Aileach himself, then, when he is not King of Eire, is entitled to sit by the side of the King of Eire at banquets and at fairs; and to go before the King of Eire, at treaties and assemblies and councils and supplications.

And he is entitled to receive from the King of Eire, fifty swords, and fifty shields, and fifty bondmen and fifty dresses and fifty steeds: these

for the King of Aileach. He distributes his stipends thus :

Five shields, and five swords, and five drinking-horns, and five bondmen, and five bondwomen, and five steeds for the King of Cairbre Droma Cliabh (*y*).

Five steeds, five bondmen, five bondwomen, five swords to the King of Cinel Aeda (*z*) of Eas Ruadh.

Six shields, six steeds, six swords, six drinking-horns, six blue cloaks, and six green cloaks to the King of Cinel Bogaine (*a*).

Five steeds, five shields, five swords, five cloaks and five coats of mail to the King of Enna (*b*).

Seven women, seven bondmen, seven steeds, seven swords to the King of Cinel Lughdhach (*c*).

Seven bondmen, seven women, seven swords, seven drinking-horns to the King of Innis-Eoghan.

Six steeds, six drinking-horns, six swords, six shields, six hounds to the King of Magh Itha.

Three steeds, three shields, three swords, three green cloaks to the King of Craebh.

Three women, three matals, three tinnes to the King of Ui Mic Caerthainn.

Three steeds, three shields, three swords and three drinking-horns to the King of Ui Fiachradh of Ard-Stratha.

Three steeds, three shields, three swords and three drinking-horns to the King of Fir Luirg.

Three steeds, three shields, three drinking-horns

and three swords to the King of the Ciannachta Glen Geimhin.

Six bondmen, six horses, six swords, and six shields to the King of Fir Li.

Three women, three bondmen, three steeds to the King of Ui Tuirtre.

Fifty bondmen and fifty swords and fifty cloaks and fifty coats of mail to the King of Tulach Og.

Of this division and distribution Benean sang thus as below, namely :

O MAN if thou hast gone northwards,
Across Magh Itha of the hardy border,
Tell the stipend of every one (*i.e.*, chieftain)
From the King of Aileach of the serene brow,

When over noble Eire reigns not
The King of Aileach of the vast tribute,
He is entitled to sit without fail,
By the side of the King of Eire of noble mansions :

Fifty swords, fifty shields,
Fifty bondmen, it is a great debt;
Fifty dresses, fifty steeds (from the Monarch)
To the King of Aileach of high decisions.

Entitled are his chieftains of prosperity,
From the King of Aileach of the armed battalions,
After resting from a hard march, I have heard
To stipends and gifts.

Five shields, five swords, five drinking horns,
Five women, great their hilarity,
To the King of Cairbre of Druim Cliabh,
From the King of Aileach of grand bridles.

Entitled is the King of Cinel Aedha,
To five shields, five slender swords,
Five bondmen (brought) over the bristling surface of the sea;
Five fair-haired truly fine women.

The King of the Cinel Boghaine the firm,
Is entitled to five steeds for cavalry;
Six steeds, six swords, six drinking horns,
Six green cloaks, six blue cloaks.

Entitled is the King of Cinel Enna,
To five beautiful powerful steeds,
Five shields, five swords of battle,
Five mantles, five coats of mail.

Entitled is the King of Cinel Lughdhach,
To seven swords for hard defence,
Seven women, seven bondmen early,
Seven noble steeds to the hero.

Entitled is the King of Inis-Eoghan,
To six bondmen—no great gratuity,—
Seven steeds, six women (brought) over the great sea,
Seven beautiful horns for drinking.

Entitled is the King of Magh Itha,
To six beautiful steeds from (other) countries,
Six drinking horns, six swords, six hounds,
Six fair shields from beyond the seas.

Entitled is the King of Ui Fiachrach Finn,
To six beautiful steeds at his good lake
Three shields, three drinking horns, three swords,
From the mighty deeded noble King of Aileach.

Entitled is the King of Fir Lurg—the hero,—
To three beautiful steeds brought from over the deep sea;
Three shields, three polished swords,
And three brown drinking horns.

Entitled is the King of Craebh to a gift,
Three strong shields as stipends,
Three shields, three swords of battle,
Three green cloaks of even colour.

Entitled is the King of Ui Mic Caerthainn,
To three tunics with golden borders,
Three beautiful fair matals,
Three befitting bondwomen.

Entitled is the King of Glen Geimhin,
To three bay steeds assuredly,
Three shields, three drinking horns, three swords,
Every year from the fair King of Aileach,

Entitled is the King of Fir Li of the Lake,
To six shields, six swords of battle,
Six slender proud horses,
And six bondmen of great work,

Entitled is the King of the Northern Ui Tuirtre,
To three swift horses for cavalry,
Three women with fair heads (of hair)
And three large enslaved bondmen.

Entitled is the strong King of Tulach Oge,
To fifty prosperous bondmen over his fields,
Fifty swords, fifty steeds,
Fifty mantles, fifty coats of mail.

Here is the stipends of Nial's race,
I found it in books clearly,
Benean's faithful hand without reproach,
Was the one that wrote it there, O man! . . . O MAN!

NOTES.

(*a*) Translated in the *Revue Celtique* with the story of the death of Crimthan.

(*b*) Magh Femin, a plain in Munster; Maen Magh, now Monmoy, Co. Galway; Almain, now Allen, Co. Kildare.

(*c*) Clonburren in Hymany, in Galway and Roscommon.

(*d*) From Brian descended the O'Conors, Kings of Connaught, now represented by the Rt. Hon. The O'Conor Don, P.C., and H. M. L. for Roscommon.

(*e*) Also the northern parts of Sligo and Leitrim then included, according to O'Donovan, in Ulster. Eventually Conal Gulban's descendants—the O'Canannans, O'Maldoreys, O'Donnells, O'Dohertys, etc.—were ceded nearly the whole of that part of Tyrone included in Donegal, and Sligo was left to the Cinel Carbery, but it appears from the Annals to have been afterwards included in Tir Conal.

(*f*) Hy Fiachra, according to O'Donovan—our chief authority for topography—extended from Carn Fearadaigh, near Limerick, to Moymucrum, near Athenry.

(*g*) *See* also for sketches on Aileach: *Derriana*, by Dr. O'Doherty; O'Neill Russell's *Beauties of Ireland;* and the *Dublin Penny Journal.* Many poems on Aileach are also mentioned in O'Curry's *Manners*, etc. From a poem by Dubhtach, chief bard to King Leary, written in 430, it would appear that Nial himself also resided at Aileach. *See* O'Curry's *Lectures.*

(*h*) Now Barnesmore Gap which leads from the Barony of Tir Aedha, or Tir Hugh, to Magh Itha, *i.e.*, the southern part of the Barony of Raphoe. About midway between the towns of Donegal and Ballybofey. The title of Isaac Butt's romance *The Gap of Barnesmore* is taken from this place.

(*i*) This was evidently the flagstone on which the Kings of Aileach were inaugurated. Dr. Petrie (Colby's *Survey*) took it to be the same known as *St. Columba's Stone*, which was to be seen in the garden of Belmont, on the Fanad Road, about one mile from Derry. This stone, made of granite, exhibits the sculptured impression of two feet, right and left, of the length of ten inches each, and is otherwise unmarked with a chisel. Close by is the platform on which it formerly stood—called *St. Columba's Mount*—measuring twenty-five feet square and raised about four feet from the ground. *See* Chapter VI., Part II.

(*j*) From Leary descended the Hy Leary in Meath, the Chiefs of whom were the O'Coindhelbhains, or O'Kindellans. This territory, or part, is now included in the Barony of Fertullagh in Westmeath.

(*k*) *See* for this legend on Leary's death in "Ye olde Englishe" the *Poems and Ballads of Ireland*, Edited by Hayes.

(*l*) After his death she married Fergus, son of Conal Gulban, by whom she had a son, Sedna, progenitor of nine Irish Kings, and another, Fedhlin, father of St. Columba. *See* Dr. Reeves' *Life of Columba.*

(*m*) Tuath Ratha, anglicised Tooragh, a territory in the north-west of Co. Fermanagh included in the present Barony of Magheraboy. O'Flanagans were chiefs, and according to O'Donovan, were afterwards tributary to M'Guire (who in turn paid tribute to the Prince of Aileach.) They derived from Carbery, brother of Eoghan.

(*n*) Lurg, now a barony in Fermanagh. Ua Maelduin, or O'Muldoon, was chief of this territory.

(*o*) Ui Fiachrach, or Hy Fiachra of Ardstraw, in Tyrone. See Chapter III., Part II.

(*p*) Ui Mic Caerthinn, *i.e.*, descendants of Caerthinn (pron. Keerin) grandson of Forgo, son of Colla Uais. The territory of this tribe was called Tir Mic Caerthinn, now the barony of Tir Keerin in the west of Co. Derry.

(*q*) Ciannachta of Glen Geimhin, or Keenaght of Glen Given. The O'Conors of Glengiven were chiefs in this territory, now included in the barony of Keenaght, Co. Londonderry.

(*r*) Ui Tuirtre, the O'Donnellans were chiefs of this territory and the O'Flynns. It was afterwards included in Clannaboy.

(*s*) Free Chieftainships of Aileach. These tribes, according to O'Donovan, were free from tribute because they were of the same blood as the King of Aileach, being descendants of Nial. The Kings of Aileach and their heirs appear to have had the privilege of assuming the chieftainships of Magh Itha, Inishowen and Tulach Og, as in the twelfth century many of the O'Neills and O'Loghlins are styled Lords of these territories. In the tract called the *Battle of Magh Rath*, edited by O'Donovan, it is stated of the Cinel Eoghan and Cinel Chonnail or Cinel Conal that "these tribes have no monarchical controul or lordly ascendancy over each other, save only that the party who happens to possess the lordship, or the monarchy, should receive auxiliary forces and a rising out for battle from the other." Up to the ninth century the chiefs of Cinel Conal, as well as the Kings of Aileach, were sometimes lords, or kings, of Ulster.

(*t*) Forthuata. Strange tribes who settled in the province.

(*u*) Tinnes, *i.e.*, hogs salted and killed.

(*v*) The people of Li or Fir Li, mentioned in the *Tripartite Life*. The O'Flynns, or O'Lynns, were chiefs of this territory. The Fir Li settled to the S. W. of the Bann gave name to the barony of Lough Inish O'Lynn (*i.e.*, the Lake of O'Lynn's island near the village of Desertmartin) now Loghinsholyn, Co. Londonderry.

(*w*) Tuathas of Tort, *i.e.*, of the Ui Tuirtre.

(*x*) Craebh. This territory, which in later ages belonged to the O'Kanes, who were called Fir na Craebh (pron., Creeve) or men of the branch, was on the west side of the Lower Bann, and its position is defined by the cataract of Eas Craebh *i.e.*, the cataract of Craebh, daughter of Eoghan M'Duirtheacht, who lived in Dun da Bheann, now Mount Sandle, and was drowned in the cataract, now called the Cutts Fishery near Coleraine.—O'Donovan.

(*y*) Cairbre of Droma Cliabh, now the barony of Carbury, in the north of the Co. Sligo. *See* Chapter V. for an explanation of this custom of giving "taurcrec."

(*z*) Cinel Aedha of the race of Conal Gulban in Tir Aedha now Tir Hugh in Donegal. O'hAedha or O'Hughes was chief of this territory, which was called the Triocha or Cantred of Eas Ruadh from the great Cataract of that name at Ballyshannon.

(*a*) Cinel Boghain, *i.e.*, the race of Enna Boghain, second son of Conal Gulban. Their territory was called Tir Boghain, and sometimes Tir Baghaineach (pron. Banagh), and included the present barony of Banagh in Donegal.

(*b*) Cinel Enna, or Enda, descendants of Enda, brother of Eoghan.

(*c*) Cinel Lughdhach, or race of Lughdhach, son of Fergus, son of Sedna, son of Fergus, son of Conal Gulban. This was the tribe name of the O'Donnells, whose territory extended from the stream of Dobhair to the river Swilly. At a later period the tribe-name was changed to Clan Dalaigh. This Dalaigh (descendant of Lughdhach), who died in 868, was the first chief of Tyrconnell of the O'Donnell Clan, and from his grandson, Donal, or Donnell they took their surname. The ancient chiefs were the O'Maldoreys and O'Canannans, now Cannons (descendants of Flaherty, son of Loingseach, Chief of Tyrconnel and last King of Ireland of the Cinel Conal), who held the Chieftainship alternately.—*Book of Fenagh*. Further particulars of the tribes mentioned above will be found in O'Duggan's Poem, Chapter III.. Part II.

CHAPTER III.

MURKERTAC MORE, KING OF AILEACH, AND FIRST CHRISTIAN KING OF IRELAND. A.D. 480 TO 504.

MURKERTAC More (*i.e.*, the Great), the "Hector of the Northern Scoti" as he is called,[1] on succeeding his father, Muredach, raised a great army in support of his cousin Lewy, son of Leary, who at the time of his father's death was too young to claim the throne of Ireland, which was seized by Olioll Wether, son of Dathi.

Joined by Fiachra Lonn, King of Dal Araidhe, and other princes, he gave battle at Ocha, near Tara, to the usurper, whom he routed and slew, A.D. 482 (*a*) after which Lewy ascended the throne:

> "The great battle of Ocha was fought,
> Through which many fights were contested
> Over Olioll Molt, son of Dathi,
> It was gained by the Dal Araidhe,
> By Lughaid, by Fiachra Lonn
> And by the great puissant Muirchertach." [2]

By this victory the race of Nial was firmly fixed on the throne, which they held without a break

[1] Petrie's *Antiquities.* [2] *Chronicon Scotorum.*

for over five centuries, the Chiefs of the Northern and Southern Hy Nials generally, though not always, as observed, reigning alternately.

Murkertac, as heir to Lewy, took command of his army, which in 489 he led against Aengus, grandson of Corc, King of Munster, and the Hy Kinnsellagh, who contested the Kingship of Leinster with Illan, son of Dunlang, son of Enna Nia the brother of Enna Kinnsellagh.

Marching into Leinster, Murkertac gave an overthrow at Cill Osnaidh, now Kellistown, Co. Carlow, to Aengus (and his allies) who perished on the field with his wife Ethne.[1]

In 497 he was obliged to advance against Illan and the Lagenians, who at this period were continually warring against the Hy Nials in trying to recover that part of their territory, seized by Fiacha, son of Nial, and included in Offaly—which extended to the hill of Ushnagh in Westmeath. Murkertac met and worsted Illan at Graney in the south of the Co. Kildare,[2] and again in 500, according to the *Chronicon Scotorum*, at Inde More.

In 499 he became involved in a quarrel with the Connacians. Duach Teangumha, or Brazen Tongue, King of Connaught (descendant of Brian, the son of Nial), having declared war on his brother Eochy Tirmcharna (*b*), Murchertac was urged by his wife, Duaibsech, to make peace between the two—her

[1] *Four Masters.* [2] *Idem.*

father and foster-father—which he did, and was a "guarantee between the King and Eochy," who was taken prisoner by Duach, notwithstanding that he had the protection of Murkertac, who, marching into Connaught, defeated and slew Duach at the battle of Seaghais, now the Curlieu Hills, near Boyle, Co. Roscommon.[1]

Five years later Murkertac succeeded Lewy, who was killed by a thunderbolt near Slane, Co. Meath.

The *Annals of Clonmacnoise* state that as he was walking in the fields one day in that neighbourhood, he saw a chapel that was dedicated to St. Patrick, when he observed to his attendants "this is the church of the clerk that prophecied that none of my father's posterity should inherit the crown of Ireland, he is false." On saying which, a thunderbolt fell from heaven upon his head, and struck him "starck ded."

Murkertac, on succeeding, sent messengers to the Leinstermen to demand the Boruma, but they, as usual, refused without a battle, and marched under Illan, their king, to Deata in Bregia, where they were defeated with great slaughter, after which, no doubt, they submitted to the inevitable.

About this time Murkertac's grandfather, Loarn More, led a colony of Dal Riads from Antrim, and aided by him, founded the Scottish Kingdom of Dal Riada, or Airer Gaedhil (pron. Airer Gael, or

[1] Keating's *History*.

Argyll) *i.e.*, the territory of the Gaels or Irish, now Argyll.

The original colony planted by Carbery Riada, grandson of Con of the Hundred Battles, was exercised by frequent hostilities from the Picts, and at one period with such good success that they forced almost the whole colony to take flight into Ireland under Eochy Munrevar, great grandson of Carbery, who found a secure retreat for his followers in the Irish Dal Riada in the North of Antrim, till they now, under Loarn, son of Erc, mentioned in the *Tripartite Life* (*see* Chap. II.), and grandson of Eochy, recovered their former possessions, and set up for the first time a regal authority. In less than a century they became sufficiently powerful to shake off all dependence on Ireland, and at length overcame the Picts, when, about the year 843, the two nations were united under Kenneth M'Alpin, a descendant of Fergus and in the female line of his brother Loarn More (*See* Reeves' *Life of Columba*).

When Loarn died, about the year 513, after a reign of ten years, he was succeeded by his brother Fergus, who resolved to be crowned on the inauguration stone of the Irish Kings—the Lia Fail, or Stone of Destiny—whose history carries us back to patriarchal times, when Jacob, a lonely wanderer, seeking repose for the night in the wilderness, sees a stone and makes it his pillow, soon

to be the base of an angelic ladder reaching to heaven. Carried in after ages by some of the Captivity to Egypt, it was transported thence by a scion of the House of Judah in the ships of Dan—the Tuatha De Danaan—to Inis Fail, where its custodians and their posterity became the royal race of "Tara of the Kings." Of it 'twas said:

"The Scots shall govern and the sceptre sway
Where'er this stone they find and its dread sound obey.[1]"

On this stone, which, according to the early bardic accounts, roared beneath the Irish monarchs, and which was now presented to the Dal Riads by Murkertac, Fergus, his grand-uncle, was solemnly crowned, as were his successors for long generations after. Translated first to Dunstaffnage Castle opposite Iona, and afterwards to the Abbey of Scone near Perth, it continued in use till it was carried away by Edward I. of England, and transferred to Westminster Abbey, where it is still to be seen under the Coronation chair, on which his present Majesty, who descends through the Stuarts from Fergus and Loarn, was so lately crowned. The stone is an oblong rectangular block of limestone, a good deal worn with handling, and bearing no engraving or inscription. For lifting it there

[1] *Keating.*

are two rings, one at each end.—*See* the *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, Vol. VIII., for the history of this stone by Wm. Skene, LL.D.

In 524 Murkertac was once more obliged to take the field against the Leinstermen, whom he defeated at the battle of Cerb or Ath Sighe, now Assey, Co. Meath; and again at Kinneagh, Moyalve, and Allen, Co. Kildare.[1]

In the 24th year of his reign he feel a victim to the revenge of a woman named Sin, whose parents were killed at the above battle of Assey, for at this time, and up to the reign of Donal and Fergus, the ladies took their place in the ranks, till prohibited by a law passed at the request of St. Adamnan in 696.

Under 533 in the *Annals of Clonmacnoise* his death is recorded thus: "King Moriertagh having had prosperous success, as well before he came to the throne as after, against those that rebelled against him, he was at last drowned in a kyve of wine in one of his own manour houses called Cleitach (Cletty) near the river Boyne by a fairie woman that burned the house over the king's head on Holland-tide." The king, thinking to save his life from burning, entered a kyve of wine in which he was drowned, "and this," it is added, "is the end of the King Moriertagh, who was both killed,

[1] *Annals.*

THE LIA FAIL OR STONE OF DESTINY,

Presented to Fergus, Prince of Argyll, ancestor of the Scottish Kings, by his grand-nephew, Murcertac, Prince of Aileach and King of Ireland, A.D. 480-533.

From *Historical Memorials of Westminster Abbey*, by Dean Stanley.

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drowned and burned together through his own folly that trusted in a woman contrary to the advice of St. Cairneagh."

Muirkertac is the hero of many an ancient legend and story of which that given below from the *Revue Celtique* is about the best.

Flan of Monasterboice, in the 11th century, wrote a poem, still preserved, on his life, which evidently embodies much of the legend related in the *Book of Ballymote* and translated by Dr. Todd in the Irish version of the *Historia Britonum* (Appendix).

According to this legend, Murkertac when a youth was banished to Alba for slaying some itinerant poets who had satirized him, In Alba he killed his grandfather Loarn, when he sought refuge in Britain with Saran, King of that country, who was the first husband of Loarn's daughter—and Murkertac's mother—Erc, by whom he had two sons, Luirig, his successor, and Cairnech, a cleric. When Luirig succeeded on the death of his father, he, in consequence of some sacrilege, was defeated and slain at the instigation of St. Cairnech, his brother, by Murkertac, who seized the throne and reigned seven years over Britain, Caithness, the Orkneys, and Saxonland. At the end of that time, he made great war on the Franks and Saxons, wasting their country and destroying their cities. He then came with a great fleet to take the sovereignty of Ireland and landing in the Boyne

he fired his ships, marched to Tara, defeated and slew the provincial kings, and gained the throne.

St. Cairnech, his cousin, as he really appears to have been, afterwards came to Ireland, and was made first Bishop of Clan Neill, and of Tara, and Chief Brehon of Ireland.

Murkertac, adds the legend, married the wife of Luirig, who was a daughter of the King of France, by whom he left four sons namely, Nellen and Scannal, who settled in Erin; and Constantine and Gaedhil Ficht, from whom descended the Kings of Britain and Cornwall, of which place St. Cairnech appears to have been a native.

There is nothing so very improbable about this Gaedhal's descendants ruling Cornwall, though what part of Britain—by which is meant Wales—Constantine held, is not clear.

When the Deisi were driven from Tara by Cormac M'Art, a branch settled in that part of South Wales called Dyfed, under Eochy, their chief, whose descendants were called Kings of Dyfed (*see* Hyde's *Literary Hist. of Ir.* and Joyce's *Soc. Hist.* Vol. I.); and about this time, as appears from the *Cambrian Biography*, quoted in Bohn's edition of the works of Giraldus Cambrensis, Cormac, the son of Carbery, who, it is stated, was one of the supreme Kings of Ireland, and who had married Marshal, daughter of Tudor, King of Carmarthen, left a son Awley or Aulach, alias Brychon, who succeeded on the

death of his grandfather to the kingdom of Carmarthen, which he changed to the name of Brychenog, which is still the Welsh name for Brecknock.

Aulach, or Brychon, is a distinguished character in the history of Wales, as being the father of a very numerous issue which came to be styled one of the three holy families of Britain; for nearly all his children embraced a religious life, and were the founders of several churches.

This Aulach could have been no other than Murkertac's cousin, and the brother, or half brother, of his successor Tuathal Maelgarbh, son of Cormac, son of Carbery, son of Nial of the Nine Hostages.

Comparatively little is known of St. Cairnech of Tuilen, now Dulane, near Kells, who figures largely in the following story—in prose and verse—entitled *Oighidh Mhuircheartaigh Mhoir Mic Earca*, or the Death of Murkertac More Mac Erca, mentioned by O'Donovan in the Four Masters, and translated from a MS. in Trinity College and the *Book of Lecan* by Dr. Whitley Stokes, who omits most of the verse.

THE DEATH OF MUIRCHERTACH MORE MAC ERCA.

When Muirchertach, son of Muredach, son of Eoghan, King of Ireland, was in the house of Cletech over the brink of the Boyne of the Brugh,—

and had a spouse, Duaibsech, daughter of Duach Brazen Tongue, King of Connaught—that king came forth one day to hunt on the border of the Brugh, and his hunting companions left him alone on his hunting mound. He had not been there long when he saw a solitary damsel, beautifully dressed, fair-headed, bright-skinned, with a green mantle about her, sitting near him on the turfen mound; and it seemed to him that of womenkind he had never beheld her equal in beauty and refinement. So that all his body and nature fired with love for her, for gazing at her it seemed to him that he would give the whole of Ireland for her, so utterly did he love her at sight. And he welcomed her as if she were known to him, and he asked tidings of her.

"I will tell thee," she said. "I am the darling of Muirchertach, son of Erc, King of Erin, and to seek him I came here." That seemed good to Muirchertach, and he said to her: "Dost thou know me, O damsel?" saith he.

"I do," she answers, "for skilled am I in places more secret than this, and known to me art thou and other men of Erin."

"Wilt thou come with me, O damsel?" saith Muirchertach.

"I would go provided my guerdon be good." "I will give thee power over me, O damsel," says Muirchertach.

"Thy word for this," rejoins the damsel. And he gave it at once, and she uttered the stave:

"This is power that is opportune,
But for the teachings of the clerics," etc.

"I will give thee a hundred of every herd, and a hundred drinking-horns, and a hundred cups, and a hundred rings of gold, and a feast every other night in the house of Cletech," says Muirchertach.

"Nay," said the damsel, "not so it shall be. But my name must never be uttered by thee, and Duaibsech, the mother of thy children, must not be in my sight, and the clerics must never enter the house that I am in."

"(All this) thou shalt have," says the King, "for I pledge thee my word; but it were easier for me to give thee half of Ireland. And tell me truly," says the King, "what name is on thee, so that we may avoid it by not uttering it."

And she said: "Sigh, Sough, Storm, Rough Wind, Winter-night, Cry, Wail, Groan." So then he uttered the lay:

"Tell me thy name, O damsel,
Thou most beloved, star-bright lady." etc.

Each of these things was promised to her and thus he pledged himself. Then they went to-

gether to the house of Clettech. Good was the arrangement of that house; and good were its family, and its household and all the nobles of the children of Nial, cheerfully and spiritedly, gaily and gladly consuming the tribute and wealth of every province in the trophied house of Clettech, above the brink of the salmonfull, ever-beautiful Boyne, and over the border of the green-topped Brugh.

Now when Sin saw the house with its family, she said: "Good is this house we have come to!" quoth she.

"It is good," says the King, "and never has there been built for Tara, or for Naas, or for Craeb Ruad, or for Emain Macha, or for Aileach Neid, a house the like of it. And give thou a testimony as to the house," says the King. So she said:

"Never has been built by a King over flood
A house like thy home above the Boyne," etc.

"What shall be done there now," demanded the damsel. "That which thou desirest," replied Muirchertach.

"If so," saith Sin, "let Duaibsech and her children go forth from the house and let a man of every craft and art in Ireland come with his wife into the drinking hall."

Thus was it done, and each began praising his

own art and craft, and a stave was made by every craftsman and artist who was therein :

" Delightful, delightful the noble realm
Of Erin's land, great its rank," etc.

When the drinking ended, Sin said to Muirchertach: " It is time now to leave the house to me as it hath been promised."

Then she put the Clans of Nial and Duaibsech with her children forth out of Clettech, and Duaibsech went with her children from Clettech to Tuilen to seek her soul friend, the holy Bishop Cairnech. (*c*) When she got to Cairnech she uttered these words :

" O cleric bless my body
I am afraid of death, to-night," etc.

" Go thou thyself, O cleric, tell
To the children of Eoghan and Conal," etc.

Thereafter Cairnech came to the children of Eoghan and Conal, and they went back together to Clettech, but Sin would not let them near the fortress. At this action the children of Nial were distressed and mournful. Then Cairnech is greatly angered, and he cursed the steading, and made a grave for the King and said : " He whose grave this is hath finished, and truly it's an end to his

realm and his princedom!" And he went on the top of the grave and said:

"The mound of these bells for ever
Henceforward everyone will know.
The grave of the great Mac Earca
Not slack have been his doings.

A curse upon this hill,
On Cletty with hundreds of troops,
May neither its corn or its milling be good,
May it be full of hatred and evil plights.

May neither Kings nor princes be in it,
May no one come out of it victoriously,
During my day, I shall remember
The King of Erin's grave in this mound."

So then Cairnech cursed the fortress, and blessed a place therein, and thereafter he came forth in grief and sorrow. Howbeit the clans of Nial said to him: "Bless us now, O cleric, that we may go to our own country, for we are not guilty as regards thee."

Cairnech blessed them, and "left leadings" to them, namely, to the Clans of Eoghan and Conal, that whenever they had not the leadership or the kingship of Ireland, their power should be over every province around them; and that they should have the succession of Aileach and Tara and Ulaid (Ulster); and that they should take no wage from anyone, for this is their own inherent right, the

Kingship of Ireland; and that they should be without fetter or hostage; and that there should be decay in the hostages when they abscond; and that they should gain victory in battle provided it is delivered for a just cause; and that they should have three standards, namely, the Cathach, and the Bell of Patrick (*i.e.*, of the Bequest), and the Misach Cairnig (*d*); and that the grace of all these reliques should be on any one of them against battle, and Cairnech left them, saying:

"My blessing on you till doomsday
O children of Nial wontedly," etc.

Each of them went into his stronghold in his own good steading.

Touching Cairnech, he came on towards his monastery, and there met him great hosts of the race of Tadg, son of Cian, son of Ailill Olomm. And they brought Cairnech with them, to make their arrangements, and their treaty with Mac Erca; and when the King was told of this he came forth from the steading and bade them welcome.

Howbeit when he espied the cleric with them, there came a great blush from him and he exclaimed: "Why hast thou come to us, thou cleric, after cursing us?"

"I have come," he answered, "to make peace between the race of Cian and the race of Eoghan, son of Nial." Then a treaty is made between them

and Cairnech mingled the blood of both of them in one vessel, and wrote how they had made the treaty. And Muirchertach said to Cairnech :

" Go, thou cleric, afar,
Be not near against our will," etc.

Then when the treaty had been made and when Cairnech had blessed them all, and left shortness of life and hell to him who should infringe the treaty, he quitted them and fared forth to his monastery. Howbeit the king went into his stronghold, and the hosts with him to guard him against the children of Nial.

The King sits on his throne and Sin sits on his right, and never on earth has there come a woman better than she in shape and appearance. When the King looked on her he was seeking knowledge and asking questions of her, for it seemed to him that she was a goddess of great power ; and he asked her what was the power she had. So then she spoke and answered :

M. Tell me, thou ready damsel
Believe thou in the God of the clerics ?
Or from whom hast thou sprung in this world,
Tell us thy origin ?

Sin. I believe in the same true God
Helper of my body against death's attack,
Ye cannot work in this world a miracle
Of which I could not work its like.

I am the daughter of a man and a woman,
Of the race of Adam and Eve,
I am fit for thee here,
Let not regret seize thee,
I could create a sun and a moon,
And radiant stars:
I could create men fiercely
Fighting in conflict,
I could make wine—no falsehood—
Of the Boyne, as I can obtain it,
And sheep of stones,
And swine of ferns,
I could make silver and gold
In the presence of this great host.

"Work for us," says the King, "some of these great miracles. Then Sin went forth and arranged two battalions equally great and equally strong and gallant; and it seemed to them that never came two battalions on earth that were bolder and more heroic, slaying and maiming and swiftly killing each other in the presence of every one.

"Seest thou yon," says the damsel, "and meseems my power is in nowise a fraud."

"I see," says Muirchertach, and he said:

"I see two battalions bold and fair
On the plain in strife," etc.

Then the king with his household came into the fortress when they had been awhile seeing the fighting, and some of the water from the Boyne

was brought to them, and the King told the damsel to make wine thereout. The damsel then filled three casks with the water and cast a spell into them and it seemed to the king and his household that never came on earth wine of better taste or strength. So of the fern she made fictitious swine of enchantment, and then she gave the wine and the swine to the hosts, and they partook of them, until, as they supposed, they were sated. Howbeit she promised that she would give them for ever and ever the same amount; whereupon Muirchertach said:

"Hitherto never has come here
Food like the food I see," etc.

So the race of Tadg, son of Cian, when they partook of the magic feast, kept watch on the King that night. When he rose in the morning he was thus: as if he were in a decline, and so was everyone else who had partaken of the wine and the fictitious magical flesh which Sin had arranged for that feast. And the King said:

"O damsel, my strength has departed,
My final grave has almost come," etc.

Then the King said: "show us something of thine art, O damsel?" "I will do so indeed," quoth she. They fared forth, that is, Muirchertach and all the hosts in his presence. Then Sin made

of the stones blue men and others with the heads of goats; so that there were four great battalions under arms before him on the green of the Brugh. And Muirchertach then seizes his arms and his battledress, and went among them like a swift angry mad bull, and forthwith takes to slaughtering them and maiming them, and every man of them he killed would rise up after him at once; and thus he was killing them through the fair day till night. Though great were the wrath and the rage of the King, he was wearied thus, and then he said:

"I see a marvel on that side
On the bushy parts of the river," etc.

So when the King was weary fighting and smiting the hosts, he comes straight into the fort and Sin gave him magic wine and magic swine. He and his household partakes and at the end he sleeps heavily till morning; and when rising then in the morning he had neither strength nor vigour, as he said:

"I am without strength, thou gentle lady,
Give, says the chaste cleric," etc.

As he was saying this they heard the heavy shouts of the hosts and the multitude calling Muirchertach forth and challenging him to battle. Then in his presence in the Brugh were two battalions, equally great, to wit, blue men in one of

the two and headless men in the other. Muirchertach was enraged at the challenge of the hosts and he rose up suddenly, and fell strengthlessly on the floor and muttered the lay :

" A heavy shout, a noise which hosts make,
A battle of blue men to the north of us.
Headless men who begin battle
In the glen to the south of us,
Weak is my strength : unto a host,
'Twas many times that I have brought victory
Great the hosts and their division,
Rude their names, rough their shout."

Then he went into the Brugh, and charged the hosts and took to slaughtering and maiming them throughout the day. There came Sin to him and she gives Muirchertach kingship over them and he rests from battling. Thereafter the King fares forth to Clettech, and Sin formed two great battalions between him and the fortress. When he saw them he charged through them, and began to battle against them.

Now when he was delivering that battle there, Cairnech sent Masan and Casan and Cridan to seek Muirchertach, so that he might have God's assistance, for the Saint knew of the oppression which he suffered at that time.

Thereafter the clerics meet him in the Brugh while he is hacking the stones and the sods and

the stalks besides, so then one of the clerics said :

Cleric : Wherefore dost thou fell the stones
O Muircheartach without ground ?
We are sad that thou art strengthless,
According to the will of an idolator, working magic.

M. The cleric who attacked (?) me
I came into conflict with him :
I know not, furthermore,
That the stones are not alive.

Cleric : Put Christ's mysterious Cross
Now over thine eyes,
Abate for a time thy furies
Wherefore dost thou fell the stones ?

Then the royal soldier's wrath ceases, and his senses come to him and he puts the sign of the cross over his face ; and then he saw nothing there save the sods of the earth.

Thereafter he asked tidings of the clerics and said :

" Why come ye from the Church,
O sons of full melodious study?" etc.

The clerics marked out a church then in the Brugh and told him to dig its trench there in honour of the great Lord of the Elements. " It shall be done," quoth he. Then he began digging the trench, so that it was then for the first time that the green of the Brugh was injured. And he was

telling the clerics his own tidings, and making to God a fervent repentance, so he said :

" I give thanks to Mary's Son
My wrath has ended here," etc.

" Since I came over sea to Erin
I remember the number of years
I have never been a day—lasting to fame—
Without a hero's head and triumph over him, etc.

Two years I was east in Alba :
I have killed my grandsire,
I have brought the hosts there into trouble
By my deeds Loarn fell.

Two years I was afterwards,
In kingship over the Danes
There has been no night thereat
Without the heads of twain on stakes."

Now after this conference the clerics blessed water for him ; and he partook of the Body of Christ, and made a fervent repentance to God, and he told them to relate to Cairnech how he had made his confession and his repentance. So then he said :

" Faithful, fighting a poor body of clay
Remember, remember, the form of the stag-beetle."

The clergy remain for that night in the Church of the Brugh and the King goes to Clettech and sat on there on his lady's right.

Sin asked him what had interrupted his combat on that day. "The clerics came to me," he answered, "and they put the sign of the cross of Christ over my face, and then I saw nothing save ferns and stones and puffballs and sprigs of sanas (?) and since there was no one there to fight me I came away."

Then Sin said:

"Never believe the clerics
For they chant nothing save unreason,
Follow not their unmelodious stave,
For they do not revere righteousness.
Cleave not to the clerics of the church
If thou desire life without treachery:
Better am I as a friend here,
Let not repentance come to thee.

M. I will always be along with thee,
O fair damsel without evil plight
Likelier to me is thy countenance
Than the teaching of the clerics."

Then Sin beguiled his mind, and came between him and the teachings of the clerics, and on that night she made magical wine for the King and his troops. The seventh night she was at her magic, on the eve of the Wednesday after All Saints Day, precisely. When the hosts were intoxicated there came the sigh of a great wind. "This is the sigh of a winter's night," says the King. And Sin said:

This I am—Rough wind, a daughter of fair nobles,

Winter-night is my name for every place together,
Sigh and Wind.

After that she caused a great snowstorm there, and never had come a noise of a battle that was greater than this shower of thick snow that fell there at that time, and from the north-west precisely it came. Then the King came forth into the hidden house, and went again into the house, and began reproaching the storm and said :

"Evil is the night to-night
Never came one equally as bad," etc.

When the feasting ended the hosts lay down and in no one of them was there the strength of a woman in childbed.

Then the King lies down on his couch, and a heavy sleep falls upon him. So he makes a great screaming out of his slumbers and awoke from his sleep. "What is that," says the damsel. "A great host of demons has appeared to me," he answered, whereupon he said :

"A form of red fire has appeared to me, etc.
The house of Cletech as a fatal fire,
Round my head blazing for ever
The Children of Nial are wrongfully suffering
Through the spells of witches, etc.
The cry of a mighty host under red fire,
This is what appeared to me."

The King rises up, for the vision which he beheld did not let him sleep, and he came forth out of the house; and in the church of the Brugh he sees a little fire by the clerics. To them then he came and said: "There is neither strength nor vigour in me to-night," and he related the vision and his dream. "And 'tis hard for me," quoth he, "to show prowess to-night even though hosts of Outlands should attack me, because of the weakness in which we are and the badness of the night." So then the clerics began instructing him, and he came in at once and then he said:

M. Full evil is the storm to-night
To the clerics in their Camp
They dare not even sleep
From the roughness of the night's storm (*sin*)

Sin. Why sayest thou my name, O man,
O son of Erc and Muredach?
Thou wilt find death,
Sleep not in the house of Cletech.

M. Tell me, thou griefless lady,
What number of the hosts fall by me.
Hide it not from me, tell without commandment,
What number will fall by my right hand.

Sin. No one will fall by thee on the floor,
O son of Erc of the high ranks.
Thou, O King, has surely ended:
Thy strength has gone to nought.

M. A great defect is my being without strength,
O noble Sin of the many forms,
Often have I killed a fierce warrior,
Though to-night I am in oppression.

Sin. Many have fallen by thy effort,
O son of Loarn's daughter.
Thou hast brought a multitude of hosts,
Alas! that thou art in evil case.

"That is true, O damsel," says he, "death is nigh me; for it was foretold that my death, and the death of Loarn my grandsire would be alike; for nowise in battle did he fall, but no doubt he was burned alive."

"Sleep then to-night," says the damsel, "and leave to me to watch thee and to guard thee from the hosts; and it is thus the house will not be burned over thee to-night."

"Truly they are coming with designs upon us, Tuathal Mael Garbh, son of Cormac, the Blind-of-an-Eye, son of Cairbre, son of Nial of the Nine Hostages."

"Though Tuathal with all his hosts be coming upon thee, have thou no fear of him to night," says the damsel, "and sleep now."

Then he went into his bed, and asked the damsel for a drink, and she cast a sleep-charm on that deceptive wine, so that he drank a draught of it, and it made him drunk and feeble without sap or

strength. Then he slept heavily, and he sees a vision there, to wit, that he went into a ship to sea, and his ship foundered, and a taloned griffin came to him and carried him to her nest, and then he and the nest were burned, and the griffin fell with him.

The King awoke and ordered his vision to be taken to his foster-brother, Dubdarind, the son of the Druid, Saignen, and Dubdarind gave the reading thereof, thus :—"This is the ship wherein thou hast been," quoth he : "to wit, the ship of thy princedom, and this is the ship that foundered, thou to be offered (?), and thy life to come to an end. This is the taloned griffin that has carried thee into her nest, the woman that is in thy company, to make thee intoxicated, and to detain thee in the house of Cletech, so that it will be burned upon thee. Now the griffin that fell with thee is the woman who will die by reason of thee." This then is the reading of that vision.

The King then sleeps heavily, after Sin had cast the sleep-charm upon him. Now, while he was in that sleep, Sin rose up and arranged the spears and javelins of the hosts in readiness in the doors, and then turned all their points towards the house. She forms by magic, many crowds and multitudes around the fortress. She herself goes in, and scatters fire in every direction throughout the house and the side walls, and then she entered her bed.

It was then the King awoke from his sleep. "What is that?" asked he of the damsel, "a host of demons has appeared to me turning the house upon me, and slaughtering my people at the door."

"Thou has no hurt from that," says the damsel, "save that it *has* appeared."

Now when they were thus in converse they heard the crack of the burning house and the shout of the host of demons and wizardry around it.

"Who is around the house?" asked the King.

Sin says: "Tuathal Mael Garbh, son of Cormac, the Blind-of-an-Eye, son of Carbre, son of Nial with his armies. He is there taking vengeance on thee for the battle of Granard," (Graney.) And the King knew not that this was untrue, and that no corporeal host was surrounding the house.

Then he rises swiftly, and comes to seek his arms, and found none to answer him. The damsel goes forth from the house, and he follows her at once, and he meets a host in front of him, so that he went heavily through them. From the door he returned to his bed. The hosts thereupon went forth and none of them escaping without wounding or burning.

Then the King came again towards the door, and between him and it were the embers and the hail of fire. When the fire had filled the doorway and all the house around, and he finding no shelter for himself, got into a cask of wine, and therein he is drowned, as he went under it, every second for

dread of the fire. Then the fire falls on his head, and five feet length of him is burned, but the wine keeps the rest of his body without burning.

The day after, when morning came, the clerics Masan, and Casan, and Cridan go before the King and carry him to the Boyne, and wash his corpse therein.

So Cairnech with his monks thereupon, visit him, and the saint himself made great grief in bewailing him and said :—"A great loss to Ireland to-day, is MacErca, one of the four best men that have gained possession of Erin, without trickery and without force, namely—Muirchertach Mac Erca, and Nial of the Nine Hostages, Conn of the Hundred Battles, and Ugaine the Great."

The body is afterwards lifted up by Cairnech to be carried to Tuilen, and there interred.

Then Duaibsech, the wife of Muirchertach, met the clerics while the corpse was among them, and she made great and mournful lamentation, and struck her palms together, and leant her back against the ancient tree in Oenach Reil ; and a burst of gore broke from her heart and her chest, and straightway she died of grief for her husband. Then the clerics put the Queen's corpse along with the corpse of the King. And then said Cairnech :

"Duaibsech, Mac Erca's noble wife,
Let her grave be dug by you here," etc.

Thereafter the queen was buried and her grave is dug, then the King is buried near the temple on the northern side and Cairnech was describing the King's character, and uttered the lay :

" The grave of the King of Aileach will abide for ever,
In Tuilan every one will see it," etc.

When the clerics had finished the burial they saw coming to them a lonely woman beautiful and shining, and robed in a green mantle with its fringe of golden thread. A smock of priceless silk was about her. Then she reached the place where the clerics were and saluted them, and so the clerics saluted her. And they perceived upon her an appearance of sadness and sorrow ; and they recognised that she it was that had ruined the King. Cairnech was asking tidings of her and said :

" Tell us thy origin
O damsel, without darkening
Thou hast wrought our shame
Though beauteous is thy body.
Thou hast killed the King of Tara,
With many of his household
By an awful evil deed," etc.

Then the clerics were asking who she herself was, or who was her father or her mother, and what cause had she from the King when she ruined him as aforesaid.

"Sin," she replied, "is my name, and Sighe, son of Dian, son of Tren, is my father; and Muirchertach Mac Erc killed my father and my mother and my sister in the battle of Cerb on the Boyne, and also destroyed in that battle all the Old Tribes of Tara and my fatherland." So then Cairnech said:

"Say, O Sin, a say without question,
Tell truly who was thy father, etc.
Not dearer to thee, was thine own father
Than Muirchertach, Nial's descendant, etc.

Sin. Myself will die of grief for him
The High-king of the west of the world,
And from the guilt of the sore tribulation
That I brought on the Sovran of Erin;
I made poison for him alas;
Which overpowered the King of the noble hosts," etc.

Then she confessed to Cairnech and to God, and made a fervent repentance, as had been taught her, and she went in obedience to Cairnech, and straightaway died there of grief for the King. So Cairnech said that a grave should be made for her, and that she should be buried on the sward of the earth. It was done as the cleric ordered, and he said:

"Sin, not dear were her doings
Until the day on which we are," etc.

Touching Cairnech, now, he showed great care for Muirchertach's soul, but he did not bring it out of hell. Howbeit he composed the prayer, which from its beginning is named *Parce mihi, Domine,* etc., and he repeated it continually for the sake of the soul of the King. So that at last the soul was given to him out of hell. Whereupon the angel came to Cairnech, and taught him that whoever should say that prayer continually would without doubt, be a dweller in heaven. So then said the angel:

" Whoever should sing strongly
The prayer of Cairnech of the mysteries
'Twould be enough to succour
Judas who was the worst ever born," etc.

So far the death of Muirchertach, as Cairnech relates it, and Tighernach, and Ciaran, and Mochta and Tuathal Maelgarb; and it was written and revised by those holy clerics, commemorating it for ever from that time to this.

IT ENDETH.

NOTES.

(*a*) Or, according to the *Four Masters*, in 479. The Annalists at this period differ sometimes by as many as ten years; and some events are entirely misplaced. In 507 they record that Fiacha, son of Nial, after the battle of Drom Dergaige, gained that part of Offaly in Leinster which extended to the Hill of Usnagh. Fiacha is also mentioned in 516 when, since his father Nial died in 405, he must have been at least 111 years of age. In the *Annals* in the *Book of Leinster*, Muredach's death is placed in 507, as is also the Battle of Cill Osnaidh, which was fought in 489. In the *Annals of Boyle*, 489 is given as the year of Murkertac's accession. Dr. Petrie gives 480-9. 480 appears to be the correct date as given above.

(*b*) This Eochy, son of Fergus, the great-grandson of Brian, was the progenitor of the Siol Murray, or O'Conors, and their co-relatives the M'Dermotts, etc. Duach, his brother, was ancestor of the O'Flahertys, etc., and Feargna the ancestor of the O'Rorkes, O'Reillys, etc.

(*c*) *See* St. Cairnech, O'Hanlon's *Lives, etc.*, at May 16th.

(*d*) The Miosach Cairnig or Cairnech was a MS, but of what is unknown. The case, an illustration of which is given in Betham's *Antiquarian Researches*, and in Mr. Doherty's *Inishowen and Tirconnell*, is of wood, overlaid with wrought silver, and ornamented with ecclesiastical figures. It is ten inches long, by nine broad, and three thick. From each side is a kind of staple to which is attached a brass chain about three feet long, supposed to have been used to suspend the box around the neck of the person who should carry the reliquary in battle. The top is elaborately ornamented and bears the following inscription in Irish, translated: "Brian, Son of Brian O'Muirguissan, covered me, Anno Domini 1534." The custody of this reliquary was hereditary in the family of O'Muirguissan, or O'Morrisson, herenachs of Clomany, in Inishowen, and it continued in their possession till the abolition of the old church tenures induced them to part with it. It was preserved in Inishowen till the middle of the 18th century, when it was obtained by the Rev. Dr. Bernard of Fahan, who

died Bishop of Killaloe and Limerick in 1806; after his death it passed through various hands, till it finally came into possession of Lord Dunraven, who presented it to St. Columba's College, Rathfarnham, Co. Dublin, where it is now preserved.

Sir Wm. Betham gives a detailed description of it and the Cathach, which was a fragment of a Latin Psalter preserved in a case, something like the Misach. It was deposited by Sir Richard O'Donnell, Bart., in the National Museum, where it is now to be seen. O'Curry in his *Lectures* gives a specimen of the handwriting of the MS. For the Bell, *see* Chapter XIII.

CHAPTER IV.

DONAL I, FERGUS, AND BAEDAN, SONS OF MURKERTAC, KINGS OF IRELAND.—ST. COLUMBA, PATRON OF THE NORTHERN HY NIALS.—HUGH ALLAN I, SON OF DONAL, KING OF IRELAND.—MALFITRIC M'HUGH AND HIS SON MALDUIN, KING OF AILEACH.—A.D. 537 TO 706.

URKERTAC was succeeded in Tara by Tuathal II., grandson of Carbery, son of Nial; and in Aileach by Donal I. surnamed Ilchealghach, or the Wily, and Fergus,—his sons by queen Duaibsech—who reigned jointly.

In 537, with their cousin, Anmire, Chief of Tyrconnell, they invaded Connaught, and at the battle of Hy-Fiacra, near Sligo, gave a great overthrow to Eoghan Bel, King of the province, whom they left on the field with many of his nobles:

The battle of Ui Fiachrach was fought, with fury of edged weapons against Bel.
The kine of the enemy roared with the javelins, the battle was spread out at Crinder.
The Sligeach (Sligo) river bore to the great sea, the blood of men with their flesh,
They carried many trophies across Eabha, together with the head of Eoghan Bel.[1]

[1] *Four Masters.*

In the "Life of St. Ceallach of Killala" in *Silva Gadelica*, the following account of this battle is given:

"Betwixt this Eoghan and the children of Nial, a great feud fell out, till not these only, but the whole two provinces stood opposed, province to province: Connacht and Ulster; their conditions were unequal, however, inasmuch as never had Eoghan Bel (grandson of Olioll Molt), suffered loss of a battle, nor was salvage ever had of him, while of his preys taken, and triumphs won of Conal, and of Eoghan, and Oriel, the frequency was beyond counting; for so long as Eoghan Bel lived, never a day's peace was made with them, but every quarter of a year (aye, every month), he raided them, and put them to the sword's edge. Thus, then, the children of Nial deemed it a hard thing, and a grievous, in this wise, ever to endure violence of Eoghan Bel, and of Fiachra's progeny, the remainder of Connaught, too, being all upon them. Ulster in general, therefore, casting about what they should do, were resolved on muster, and preparation for a foray in full numbers. and so fell upon the land of Connaught.

"Two Kings there were that at this time ruled them (Ulster): Fergus and Donal, Muirchertach Mac Erca's two sons; on Connacht now these made great preys, and all before them to the Moy (river) ravaged completely, utterly: at driving of which stealths, they were a gathering five battles

(battalions) strong. Clan Fiachrach's braves set out, indeed, to pursue, but never a cow was taken from the others, nor a sword dulled on them until at the bridge of Martra (near Ballysadare, Co. Sligo), Eoghan's family and household overtakes them, and pressed them hard and sore in fight. At Sceichin na Gaoithe, Eoghan himself caught them up. He (seeing the so great host) to Fergus, to Donal, and to Ulster's nobles, despatched ambassadors (men of science and art), who bade them abandon the prey in its integrity, and so depart in peace, or otherwise be challenged presently to battle. The envoys sought Fergus and Donal, to whom they delivered Eoghan's mandate; but they, as having their prey in front of them, and being therefore high in spirits, and cheery to abide the fray, denied all restitution. Of Clan Neill, and of Ulster, there were five battles (battalions) with them of Oriel (Oirghialla), added. One huge battle of Clan Fiachrach, and Connacht's braves besides, in their own separate companies, but all under Ceallach's son, Eoghan Bel.

"When Eoghan heard from Clan Neillthat which his poets brought him back, he dismounted; for they told him that for this time war was his only alternative, nor should he ever (so said Ulster)—no, though he stood this battle—win back a single cow. Then Connacht armed and suddenly, swift, unsparing, charged upon Clan Neill. At sight

of Eoghan's standards, and of the banners that so many times led their preys, Ulster turned; either side in hate quivering to reach the other, and between them there the battle of Sligo was fought. . Eoghan commanded that he should be buried in the open field on the borders of Clan (Hy) Fiachrach with his spear red, and in his hand, and his face towards the north."

On hearing this, Donal and Fergus returned, and carried off Eoghan's head, which they buried near Lough Gill, with the mouth downwards, hence we suppose, he was called Eoghan Bel, or Mouth. Eoghan was father of St. Ceallach.

In 544 they again defeated the Connacians at the battle of Cuil Connaire, in the present Barony of Carra, Co. Mayo, where fell Ailill, King of Connaught, and his brother, Hugh, the Brave.[1]

In the version of the Boroma given in *Silva Gadelica*, it is related that when the battle had gone against Ailill, and he and his army were in full retreat, the King, sitting in his chariot, in the midst of the flying multitude, said to his charioteer: "Cast thine eyes back, I pray thee, and tell me if there is much killing of my people, and if the slayers are near us." The charioteer did so, and said: "The slaughter that is made on thy people is intolerable." Then said the King: "Not their own guilt, but my pride and unrighteousness it

[1] *Idem.*

is that they are suffering for. Turn now the chariot, and let me face the pursuers, for as their enmity is against me only, if I am slain it will be the redemption of many."

The chariot was accordingly turned round, and the King plunged amidst his foemen, and was slain by them, on which the pursuit and slaughter ceased. The original of this narrative was put into metrical English by Dr. Stokes in the form of a short ballad given in a *Treasury of Irish Poetry*.

About this time St. Columba, or Columcille, cousin of Donal and Fergus—who, as the annals and extracts from the *Life of St. Ceallach* shows, were then princes of Aileach and rulers of Ulster and not, as 'tis generally stated (*a*), Anmire, Chief of Cinel Conal—was presented by them with what was then, and long after, called the Island of Derry, a rising ground of oval shape covering some 200 acres, along the slopes of which flourished a splendid forest of oak trees, which gave to the oasis its name of Derry, or the Oak Grove.

Here, in 545, according to the *Annals of Ulster*, he founded his church of Derry, anciently called Daire Cailgaich ; and after the tenth century, Daire Columcille. This, the original church, was called the Dubh Regles, and was built close to the site now occupied by the Catholic Cathedral, and hence it was outside the walls of the modern city. Nigh

to it were three wells, anciently known as Adamnan's Well, Martin's Well, and Columba's Well, two of which, called Columba's Wells, remain.[1] Near to the church was erected a round tower, which has also disappeared. So anxious was Columba to spare the beautiful oak grove which covered the hill, that he would not even build his church with the chancel towards the east, according to custom, because in that case some of his beloved oaks should be cut down to make room for the church. It was probably for the same reason he built on the low ground, at the foot of the hill, instead of on its slope or summit, where the modern city stands. He strictly enjoined his successors to spare the sacred grove, and even directed that in case any of the trees were blown down by a storm, to give a part to the poor, a part to the citizens, and to reserve another part as fuel for the guest house.

This was Columba's first religious institution, which he always loved dearly, and years afterwards when the thought of it came back to him on the barren shores of Iona he expressed himself in passionate Irish poetry (from Hyde's *Literary Hist of Ir.*):

"For oh! were the tributes of Alba mine
From shore unto centre, from centre to sea,
The site of one house, to be marked by a line,
In the midst of fair Derry were dearer to me.

[1] *Ancient Schools and Scholars*, by Dr. Healy.

That spot is the dearest on Erin's ground
For the treasures that peace and that purity lend,
For the hosts of bright angels that circle it round,
Protecting its borders from end to end.

The dearest of any on Erin's ground,
For its peace and its beauty I gave it my love,
Each leaf of the oaks around Derry is found
To be crowded with angels from heaven above.

My Derry! My Derry! my little oak grove,
My dwelling, my home, and my own little cell,
May God the Eternal in Heaven above
Send death to thy foes and defend thee well."

Columba was much attached to his kinsmen of Cinel Conal and Cinel Eoghan, in whose territory he founded many other churches and monasteries, and whose great patron he was, as a poem in the *Saltair na Rann* says:

"Of Erin all is Patrick judge,
On Macha's royal hill;
They bless his name with loud acclaim
Our King by God's high will.
The Clanna Neill a sheltering oak
Have found in Columcille,
And Uladh's sons are strong behind
Great Finnian of Moville."

Columcille continued his labours in Ireland, founding churches and monasteries,—as Durrow, Kells, Swords, Drumcliff, Screen, Kilglass, Drum-

Columb, etc.—until he was forty-two years of age, at which time he was at the height of his physical and mental powers, and enjoying a reputation second to that of none in Erin.

The Commentator in the *Feilire of Aengus* describes his appearance as that of "a man well-formed, with powerful frame; his skin was white, his face was broad and fair and radiant, lit up with large, grey, luminous eyes; his large and well-shaped head was crowned, except where he wore his frontal tonsure, with close and curling hair; his voice was clear and resonant, so that he could be heard at the distance of 1,500 paces, yet sweet with more than the sweetness of the bards."

In 555 occurred those events which involved his kinsmen in a quarrel with Dermod the High king and had the result of driving him abroad and launching him upon a more stormy and dangerous career as the Apostle of Scotland, and the Picts.

In this year Curnan, son of Hugh, King of Connaught, a cousin of Donal and Fergus, and grandson of Eochy Tirmcharna, their mother's brother, was a hostage with Dermod the High king, who gained the throne after the death of Tuathal II.

One day while Curnan was playing on the plain of Tara, he quarrelled with the son of the King's chief steward, whom he killed with a blow of his hurly.

Seeing what he had done, he fled for refuge to Columba, who was then in the King's presence. Being apprised of what had happened, Dermod, who was no respecter of persons, gave orders to have the youth seized and put to death, for having desecrated the precincts of the royal palace, contrary to the ancient law and usage. In violation of the rights of sanctuary attaching to St. Columba, Curnan was torn from his grasp and executed.

The breach ensuing from this was further intensified by another incident. While visiting at Clonard the Saint secretly made a copy of a beautiful book of the Psalms kept by the Abbot, St. Finnian, in the Abbey Church. The venerable Abbot soon discovered the fact, and demanded the copy as his right. The book had cost Columba many a sleepless night, and he stoutly refused to give it up. Unable to agree, the disputants appealed to Dermod, whose judgment was: "To every cow belongeth her calf." Sorely grieved at the loss of his copy, which he was obliged to surrender to his old master, he boldly exclaimed: "This is an unjust decision, O Dermod, and I will be avenged!"

Thereupon Columba was placed in durance by order of the monarch, but having miraculously escaped, as it was said, he directed his lonely footsteps to his relatives Donal and Fergus, whose father, Murkertac, and Columba's father, Felim, were half brothers, sons of Erca. On this journey,

and while in the midst of bleak and lonely mountains, he composed the *Song of Trust*, which the illustrious Count Montalembert—*Monks of the West*—remarks, "may be reckoned among the most authentic relics of the ancient Irish tongue." An English version of this pathetic poem commences :

"Alone am I on the mountains ;
O royal sun, prosper my path,
And then I shall have nothing to fear.
Were I guarded by six thousand,
Though they might defend my skin,
When the hour of death is fixed
Were I guarded by six thousand
In no fortress could I be safe."

His safe arrival was hailed with the utmost enthusiasm by the Princes of Aileach and Tir-Conal, who, on hearing of his sufferings, flew to arms, and joined by Hugh, King of Connaught, they gained a decisive victory at Cooldrevny, near Sligo, over Dermod, who was compelled to save himself by flight, after losing three thousand of his men. At this battle Columbkille was present, and prayed ardently for the success of his kinsmen (*b*) :

"O God, wilt thou not drive off the fog which envelopes our numbers,
The host which has deprived us of our livelihood,
The host which proceeds around the cairns !
He is a son of storm who betrays us,
My Druid—he will not refuse me—is the Son of God and may he side with me."

After this battle Columba was excommunicated, but this was soon withdrawn, and it was enjoined as a penance that he should convert to God as many unbelievers as Christians had perished in the battle. So, in his forty-second year, he set sail from Ireland with twelve disciples, and landed on the island of Hy or Iona, off the coast of Argyll, of which he received a present for ever from his kinsman, Conal, Prince of Argyll and the Isles.[1] For about 200 years after the foundation of this monastery, almost all its abbots were descendants of Conal Gulban.

Iona, which has now a population of about 500, is in possession of the Duke of Argyll, Chief of Clan Campbell, who has written a history of the island.

In 557, Donal and Fergus, at the request of some Pictish chiefs—Baetann, son of Kenn, and two others—who had been unjustly deprived of part of their territory,—led their men against Hugh the Speckled, King of Dalaraidhe, whom they defeated and slew at the great battle of Moin-doire-lothair—thought to be Moneymore, Co. Londonderry—with seven of his chiefs. As a reward for their services they received back the territory of Magh Li in the present barony of Coleraine, Co. Londonderry, and Carn Eolarg in the same neighbourhood, which were granted

[1] Adamnan's *Life of St. Columba*, edited by Reeves; *Four Masters*, etc.

by their father, Murkertac, to Fiachra Lonn, or the Harsh, after the battle of Ocha in 482. (*c*)

Far away in Britain, Columba beheld this battle which St. Adamnan, his biographer, calls the battle of "Andemone." He writes: "About two years, as we have been told, after the battle of Cuildrebhne (Cooldrevny), at the time when the holy man about going on his pilgrimage, first sailed from Scotia (Ireland), on a certain day, and at the very same hour, when the battle, called in Irish, Andemone, was fought, the same man of God being then in Britain with King Conal, the son of Comgal (and grandson of Fergus More Mac Earc), told him everything, as well about the battle itself, as also about the Kings to whom the Lord granted the victory over their enemies: their names were Anmeri, son of Sedna (Chief of Tyrconnell) and the two sons of Mac Earc, Domnald and Fergus."

Columba's love for the Clan Neill did not permit him to remain indifferent to the struggles in which they were so often engaged, even in Iona.

"Nothing was dearer to his heart" as the illustrious author of the *Monks of the West*, says "than the claim of kindred; for that reason alone he occupied himself without cease with the affairs of individual relatives. 'This man,' he said to himself, 'is of my race; I must help him. It is my duty to pray for him, because he is of the same

stock as myself. This other is of kin to my mother, etc.' And then he would add, 'My friends and kindred, who are descended like me from the Nialls, see how they fight!' And from the far distance of his desert isle he fought with them in heart and thought, as of old he had aided them in person. He breathed from afar the air of battle; he divined the issue by what his companions considered a prophetic instinct, and told it to his monks, to his Irish countrymen, and to the Caledonian Scots who sought him in his new dwelling."

In 559 Donal and Fergus succeeded to the High kingship, on the death of the unfortunate Dermod, son of Fergus Wrymouth, grandson of Conal Criffan, son of Nial; and father of Colman, from whom descended the Clan Colman, or O'Melaghlins, Princes of Meath.

Dermod was the last High-king to reside at Tara, which was deserted in consequence of a curse pronounced on the place by St. Ruadhan, or Rodanus of Lorrha, in Tipperary, whose sanctuary he had violated.

The great Assembly, or Feis of Tara, which accustomed the people to the idea of a centre of government and a ruling power, could now be no more convened, "and a thousand associations and memories" as Dr. Hyde (*Literary Hist.*) truly observes, "which hallowed the office of the High king were snapped in a moment. It was a blow

from which the monarchy of Ireland never recovered, a blow which, by putting an end to the great triennial or septennial conventions of the whole Irish race, weakened the prestige of the central ruler, increased the power of the provincial chieftains, segregated the clans of Ireland from one another, and opened a new road for faction and dissension throughout the entire island."

Dr. Hyde has a detailed account of the cursing which is told in brief by O'Curry (*Manners and Customs*) as follows:

"Strictly administering the laws, as they then stood in Erinn, King Diarmait kept up a constant visitation by his great stewards, and *Fianns*, or standing army, throughout the country, to enforce them. Now it happened that on one occasion these officers passed into the province of Connaught, preceded by one of the King's heralds,—whose business it was to announce their approach at any noble residence at which they intended to claim the free quarterage due to their official dignity, while engaged in the examination of the state of the district and the administration of the laws by the King's command. The mode of proceeding of the royal agents was this: Whenever they came to the house of a provincial king or chief, in which they intended to take up their temporary abode, the herald, who carried (we are told) as his insignia of office and authority, the monarch's favourite

spear, always approached the door of the residence holding that famous weapon "horizontally" across his hands; and whenever the door was not wide enough to admit the spear in that position, the herald used to mark the walls at either side to be taken down, until the required breadth was obtained, a curious relic of the peculiar sumptuary laws or usages of more ancient times.

The King's stewards and his heralds having gone into Connacht on their tour of inspection, came to the castle of Aedh Guaire, King of Ui Maine, a large district situated partly in the present counties of Galway and Roscommon, and of which the ancient sept of the O'Kellys were chiefs. Here they found that the royal spear would not enter "horizontally," and the walls were obliged to be broken down in consequence. But Aedh, the lord of the place, becoming enraged at this, in his anger attacked and slew the King's herald, who carried the spear.

When his anger had cooled so far as to see what he had done, knowing the stern disposition of the monarch, Aedh Guaire fled precipitately from his house, across the Shannon, taking refuge in Lower Ormond with his cousin, the Bishop Senach. The Bishop, however, did not deem himself sufficient protection in such a case; and he accordingly conveyed the fugitive without delay to the more powerful and sacred sanctuary of the celebrated

St. Ruadan of Lothra (now Lorra), in that district. St. Ruadan himself felt some uneasiness as to his power of appeasing the king in so serious an affair; and he again conveyed the prince secretly to friends in Wales, but the king's influence followed him even into that country; and his friends there were forced to send him back to Saint Ruadan.

Diarmait having received information of the return of Aedh, went directly from Tara with a party of his people to Lothra, and demanded of St. Ruadan to deliver him into his hands. This the saint refused to do; whereupon the king took him by force, in violation of the well-established privilege of his saintly sanctuary. Saint Ruadan, therefore, accompanied by St. Brendan of Birr, followed the king to Tara; but Diarmait would not listen to them. And then the two saints went round the hill of Tara, ringing their bells and cursing it, and prophesying that no King of Erinn should ever again reside there. And this was fulfilled; for Diarmait having been soon after murdered in Dal-Araidhe, in Ulster, (in consequence, it was believed, of his insult to Saint Ruadan), the succeeding Kings of Erinn choose to reside in other places."

Donal and Fergus chiefly resided, like their successors of the Cinel Eoghan, in Aileach, while the Southern Hy Nials had Dun-na-Sciath (the Fort of the Shield), of which the circular fort still

remains on the western shore of Lough Ennell, in Westmeath; and Rath, near the western shore of Lough Lene in the same County, about two miles from Castlepollard. The O'Melaghlins (Kings of Ireland, and Meath, of the race of Conal Crimthan) chiefly resided at Fremain, now Frewen Hill, rising over the western side of Lough Owel, on the top of which the old fort still stands.

Donal and Fergus, on succeeding Dermod, marched against the Leinstermen, whom they vanquished at the battles of Duma Aichir, and Gavra Liffey, in Co. Wicklow. Of these and the preceding battles Cenfala of Deryloarn, who died in 679, writes:

"Sharp weapons stretch, men stretch
In the great bog of Doire Lothair,
The cause of the contention for right
Seven Cruithnian Kings, including Hugh Breac (were slain)
The two sons of Mac Erca return
In the same manner the King, Anmire, returns.
With the possessions of Sedna.

The battle of all the Cruithni is fought
And they burn Elne (*d*)
The battle of Gabhar Liphe (Gavra Liffey)
And the battle of Cuil Dreimhne (Cooldrevny).

They bear pledges after valour
Thence westwards about Cnuas-Cnuach
Fergus, Donal, Anmire
And Naindidh, son of Duach,

Splendidly he bears his course—
Baetan's steed—upon the host,
Pleasing to Baetan of the yellow hair
'Twill bear his burden upon it.[1]"

In 561, after Donal and Fergus had been two years in the sovereignty, they both died, some say of the plague.

They were succeeded in the sovereignty by Eochy the Fair, son of Donal, who made his uncle, Baodan, or Baetan mentioned in the above poem, a partner in the government, but two years after, they were assassinated by one of their own sub-chiefs—Cronan, son of Teernagh, Chief of the Keenaght of Glen Given—who soon after fell in a battle near Limerick.

Their deaths are noticed in the *Life of St. Columba* as follows: "While travelling through a rough and rocky country, which is called Ardta Muirchol (Ardnamurchan in the north of Argyll), and hearing his companions, namely, Laisren, son of Feredach (afterwards Abbot of Iona), and Diarmait, his minister, speaking on the way of the two above-named Kings, he uttered these words to them: 'Oh! my dear sons, why do you talk so foolishly of them? for both of those kings of whom you now are speaking are slain, and their heads cut off by their enemy. This very day, moreover, some

[1] *Annals of Ulster.*

sailors coming here from Ireland will tell you the same about these two kings!' And that same day sailors landing from Ireland at the place which is called Muirbolg of paradise, told the two above-named companions, sailing in the same ship with the saint, that the prophecy of the holy man regarding the death of the kings was fulfilled."

Anmire, son of Sedna, and great-grandson of Conal Gulban, was the next king; and then Baedan, Chief of Tyrconnel, his kinsman.

In Aileach, Eochy and Baodan were succeeded by Colman the Celebrated (Rimidh), nephew of Donal and Fergus.

In 579 he was worsted by Hugh, the son of Anmire—who seized on the throne after the death of Baodan—at the battle of Drum Mac Erca (*i.e.*, the Ridge of M'Erca) where Colga, son of Donal, was slain.[1]

Some years later, however, he overthrew the Cinel Conal, under Conal the Hound (Cu), son of Hugh, at the battle of Slewen, near Mullingar, where Conal was compelled to save himself by flight.[2]

In 594 he and Hugh Slain, son of Dermod, succeeded Hugh M'Anmire; but after a short reign they were both slain A.D. 601; Colman by his own brother, Lochan Dilmhain or Dillon, son of Baodan; and Hugh by his nephew Conal Sweetvoice, son of

[1] *Four Masters.* [2] *Idem.*

Sweeny, in revenge for the death of his father, who fell in Offaly in an engagement with Hugh some time before.[1]

Colman's brother, Lochan Dillon, according to the *Book of Armagh* quoted by O'Hart, was the ancestor of the Dillons of Westmeath. M'Geoghegan, on the authority of Lodge, says that Lochan fled to France and entered the service of the Duke of Aquitane, who was then at war with King Clotaire. Lochan contributed greatly by his valour to keep the Duke in his sovereignty, and to reward him for his services he gave him his only daughter in marriage. By virtue of this alliance he became Prince of Aquitane, on the death of his father-in-law, who died *s.p.m.*

Lochan's descendants ruled for a long time in Aquitane and were only dispossessed by William, Prince of the House of Burgundy, in the 12th century.

Henry II., having espoused Eleanor, daughter of William, and heiress of Aquitane, thought it prudent to remove the two remaining Dillons—Thomas and Henry—to England, where he provided for them an education suitable to their birth. On attaining manhood Henry received the order of knighthood; and was afterwards sent to Ireland as secretary to Prince, afterwards King, John. From him he received the territory of Corkeny,

[1] *Id.*

and other lands in Westmeath. His descendants in later times were created Earls of Roscommon, and Viscounts Dillon, etc.—*See* Burke's *Peerage.*

Colman had a daughter Fina, married to Oswy, Saxon King of Northumbria, who spent some time in exile in Ireland. By him she had a son, Alfrid, afterwards King of Northumbria, who was educated in Ireland, where, during the reign of his half brother, he, too, lived in exile.[1]

This prince, styled in the *Annals* "Flan Fina" composed a short poem on his travels in Ireland, which is still preserved, and which will be found in Mangan's *Poems*, edited by D. J. O'Donohoe:

"I found in Innisfail the fair,
In Ireland while in exile there,
Women of worth, both grave and gaymen,
Many clerics, and many laymen.

"I travelled its fruitful provinces round,
And in every one of the five I found,
Alike in Church in palace and hall,
Abundant apparel and food for all.

"Gold and silver I found, and money,
Plenty of wheat and plenty of honey,
I found God's people rich in pity,
Found many a feast and many a city."

He gives no account of the land of Owen, though he mentions the land of Conal:

"I found in the country of Conal the Glorious
Bravest heroes ever victorious."

[1] *Life of St. Columba.*

Hugh, nephew of Colman, and son of Donal, by his queen, Bridget, daughter of Orca son of Eric, son of Eochah (*e*) succeeded to the sovereignty on the death of his uncle and Hugh Slaine, in 601.

Hugh, surnamed Uariodhuach, or of the Shivering Disease, or Ague, and also Aldan or Allan, on coming to the throne and being refused the Boruma, invaded the Leinstermen, and gave them an overthrow at the battle of Slaibhre, of which a Leinster bard (or according, to the Leinstermen, "an old woman") said [1]:

"Were it in the time of the son of Eochaid that the Northerns came,
From the battle which they gained they would have been panic driven.
If in a pillared house were the son of Eochaid, son of Muredach,
I would not bring my full sack to a church, for the sake of Hugh Aldain."

Under Branduff, son of Eochaid, King of Leinster, mentioned above, the Leinstermen gave many an overthrow to the Hy Nials, by whom they were so heartily detested, that according to a legend given in the *Annals of Clonmacnoise*, under date 936, Murkertac, Prince of Aileach, and King of Ulster, on one occasion having vanquished and slain Cearbhaill, their king, carried his bones with him to Ulster "and there artificially caused to be made

[1] *Four Masters.*

a payer of tables of the said king's bones, which for a very long time after was kept as a monument in the King of Ulster's house."

In Hugh's reign flourished St. Mura of Othain Mura—now Fahan, west of Inishowen—the particular patron of the O'Neills. His father, Feredac (son of Ronan, son of Owen, the brother of Murkertac M'Erc) and Hugh, were cousins, both being great-grandsons of Muredach, son of Eoghan.

Mura was Abbot of the monastery of Fahan, founded by St. Columbkille, whose life he is said to have written in Scotic verse. The MS. of this, with a large book of Chronicles and other works of the same nature, were preserved up to the 16th century in the Monastery; and in Colgan's time (about 1630) his crozier, called the Bachal Mura, or Staff of Mura, was preserved with great veneration by the O'Neills themselves.

This staff, richly ornamented with gold and precious stones, was sometimes used as a swearing relic, and many miracles are said to have been wrought by it. It is now believed to have passed into the collection of Mr. John Bell of Dungannon, Co. Tyrone.

St. Mura's bell is a very interesting relic, and illustrations of it, with an elaborate description, are given in the *Ulster Journal of Archæology*; and also in *Inishowen and Tyrconnell* by W. J. Doherty.

Several curious legends are told in connection with it. It has no tongue, and tradition asserts that it appeared at first descending from heaven to earth, while its approach was announced by loud ringing. When within reach of the people attracted by its sounds, it suddenly ceased ringing, and the tongue was observed to detach itself from the bell and return towards the skies.[1]

Hugh treated Mura with such respect and consideration, that on one occasion before he came to the throne, he prophecied and said to him: "Beloved son, I promise to thee in the presence of God the reward of that veneration which thou hast shown, namely, that thou shalt obtain the sovereignty of Erin soon, and that thou shalt gain victory and triumph over thy enemies, and thou shalt not be taken off by a sudden death, but thou shalt take the body of the Lord from my hand, and I will pray to the Lord that thou mayest depart old from this world."

It was not long after this when, as the *Fragments of Annals* tell us, "Hugh Allan assumed the Kingdom of Erin; and he gained many battles over the Leinstermen and his enemies in general; and he granted fertile lands to Mur-Othna (Othain Mura)."

"He was eight years in the sovereignty, and then his death sickness seized on him, and he sent for

[1] *Lives of the Irish Saints* (12th March) by Canon O'Hanlon.

SHRINE OF ST. MURA'S BELL.
(*Ulster Journal of Archæology*).

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Mura, and Mura came, and the King said to him: 'O, cleric,' said he, 'thou hast deceived us, for we have neglected our penance, because we thought that through thy word it would come to pass that we should be aged in life, and now methinks death is near me.'

"'It is true,' said the cleric, 'death is near thee, and thy life has been cut short; and thou hast incurred the anger of the Lord; and tell what thou hast done by which thou hast offended the Lord.'

"'I will declare,' replied the King, 'what I think has offended the Lord; I desired,' said he, 'to collect the men of Erin to this mountain to the east, *i.e.*, Carrlaegh (near Aileach) to raise it and to erect a very great house upon it; and my wish was that the fire of that house, every evening, might be seen in Britain and in Airir Gaedhel (now Argyll, Scotland), and I know that that was a great pride.'

"'That was bad,' replied the cleric, 'but that is not what cut short thy life.'

"'I also desired,' said the King, 'to build a bridge at Cluain Iraird (Clonard), and to build miraculously that my name might live upon it for ever.'

"He also told many things of a similar nature.

"'It is not anything of these,' said the cleric, 'that has shortened thy life.'

"'I have another thing to tell,' said the King, 'the hatred which I have for the Leinstermen; for my wish would be to collect all their men to

war, and to kill them all therein, and to bring their women and their slaves to serve the Ui Neill; to bring our race in the north of Erin to Meath, and to settle the men of Meath in Leinster.'

"'Alas! alas!' said the cleric, 'this is what has shortened thy life, for the people which is hateful to thee, that is, the Leinstermen, have saints to pray for them before the Lord, and Bridget is greater than I, and her prayers are more powerful than my prayers. But, however, the Lord is merciful and forgiving; and do thou immolate thyself to him for the cruelty which was in thy heart towards the Leinstermen that thou mayest be in a kingdom more lasting than thy temporal kingdom.'

"The King was then anointed, and he took the Body of the Lord, and dying immediately, went to heaven."

According to the *Four Masters* he died in 607 at Ath-da-fearta, *i.e.* Ford of the two graves. In 817 King Hugh Ordnee, his descendant, died, and most probably was buried at the same place, in Magh Conalli, a plain in Co. Louth, where there appears to have been a church, or monastery.

Hugh was evidently a pious prince; and a great benefactor to the church; and from him, doubtless, St. Eoghan, or Eugene, who, curiously enough, was a Lagenian, and uncle of St Kevin of Glendalough, received a grant of those lands of Ardstraw on the bank of the river Derg, in the present Barony of

Clogher, Co. Tyrone, on which he erected his monastery, which maintained its pre-eminence for many centuries.

"As a consequence of its ecclesiastical importance," says Dr. Reeves (Colton's *Visitation*), "the termon lands of the church were very extensive, containing sixteen ballyboes, whereas the average of other churches was only four."

Sometime after his arrival in Cinel Eoghan, Eugene was consecrated bishop, when he fixed his see in this place.

The monastery and its extensive lands shared the fate of all our other religious houses at the time of the Reformation. A graveyard alone now marks its site, for the ruins of the great building. Dr. O'Doherty (*Derriana*) tells us, were taken down some years ago by the farmer who owned the ground, and were employed for ordinary building purposes. A gross act of profanation was performed at one time by running a county road through the graveyard, leaving the coffins exposed and unprotected for many a day. It is now properly enclosed by a wall.

St. Eugene died, according to the annalists, in 617, and was buried in his church, but no trace of the grave remains, nor does any tradition exist to point out the hallowed spot.

Eugene is reckoned the first Bishop of Cinel Eoghan. Some time after his death the see is

said to have been transferred to Rath Luraigh, now Maghera, Co. Londonderry.

In the synod of Rathbreasail, held in 1110, in which the boundaries of the different dioceses were defined, we find the diocese of Ardstraw, or Cinel Eoghan, as it is also called, extending from Carnglas, now the Tops, a hill between Raphoe and Donaghmore, in the County Donegal, to Lough Crui, a lake in the south of the county Tyrone, on the one side, and to Benevenagh in Magilligan on the eastern shore of the Foyle, in the north of Londonderry. This was nearly co-extensive with Cinel Eoghan at that time.

Hugh was succeeded by Malcova, son of Hugh M'Anmire, as High king, and as Prince of Aileach by Sweeny the Famous (Suibhne Mean), son of Fiachra, son of Feredach, (a quo. Cinel Feredach), son of Muredach, son of Eoghan, of the Cinel Feredach, or Cinel Farry Sept of the Cinel Eoghan.

An amusing, though rather coarse (or patriarchal) story of Sweeny's father is told in the *Fragments of Annals*. Of himself it is stated that one day, when a young man, he remarked to his wife, Rona, daughter of the Lord of Hy Tuirtre: "It is a matter of wonder to me how so few of the race of Eoghan have up to this time taken Chieftainship over all." She replied in a tone of derision: "Why dost not thou exercise hardihood and go in the vanguard to fight withal, and to gain frequent

triumphs." "It is so it shall be," said he, and though at first his chances were very remote, being of a younger branch, he at length by his valour and resolution gained the Chieftainship of Aileach, on the death of Hugh, and soon after, the High kingship, which he held for thirteen years when (623) he was assassinated by Congal Squint Eye (Claen), Prince of Ulidia, on the green of the palace of Aileach, as he was playing chess with some of his courtiers.

Crunmael, his son and successor in the Chieftainship of Aileach, with Donal, son of Hugh M'Anmire, the High-king, shortly afterwards attacked Congal, and at the battle of Dunceithrin, in Tir-Eoghan (now Co. Londonderry), defeated him with immense slaughter, and drove him from his Chieftainship into Scotland, whence he returned some years later with a great host of Scots, Picts and Saxons, and landing on the coast of Down, proceeded to ravage Tir-Eoghan and Tir-Conal.

Donal, the monarch, at once mustered his forces, and joined by Crunmael, and Malduin, son of Malfiitric, son of Hugh of the Ague, and other Chiefs of the Cinel Eoghan, proceeded to Magh Rath, now Moira, Co. Down, about four miles N.E. of Lurgan, where the enemy, under Congal and Donal the Speckled, Prince of Argyll, and others, were prepared to give battle.

Having arrayed his forces, Donal, turned his face "upon the Princes of Aileach, namely, upon

Cronmael, son of Suibhne, with the chiefs of the illustrious race of Eoghan about him, and said to them: 'In whom is it more becoming to check the unjust judgment of Congal, and to humble the haughty words of the Ultonian (Ulidian), or to protect the race of Congal against violent assaults than in the Princes of Aileach? For no two tribes of the old surnames of the men of Erin are as us—vessels formed by one hand, the race of one father, the offspring of one mother, of one conception, of one fostering,—as the author testifies:

> Eoghan and Conal, without doubt,
> Two of equal estimation, pure, perfect,
> Were conceived together—honourable deed—
> And at one birth were born.

Wherefore, our fathers, Eoghan, the renowned, and Conal the defensive, have bequeathed unto us the same prowess and gifts, freedom and noble-heartedness, affection and brotherly love.'"

The Cinel Eoghan in reply said that they would do as much as any of the provinces to sustain the front and maintain the battle, which they did, when, after a battle lasting seven days, Congal was slain and his army annihilated,[1] A.D. 636. Ferguson's epic, *Congal*, relates to this battle.

This is the only noteworthy event recorded in the reign of Cronmael, who appears to have been

[1] *Battle of Magh Rath*, edited by O'Donovan.

succeeded by his nephew, Flan, son of Cenfalad, slain in 698.

In 699 Malduin, son of Malfiitric, and grandson of Hugh of the Ague, gained the Princedom of Aileach after the death of Flan, son of Maltuil, another nephew of Cronmael, who deposed his cousin, Arthuil, son of Cronmael, and compelled him to seek refuge in Britain.

Malduin's father, Malfiitric, the senior representative of Eoghan, after the death of Sweeny, contested the Chieftainship with Cronmael, but at the battle of Lethairbhe (not identified) he was worsted and slain by the latter's uncle, Ernan, son of Fiachra, Chief of Cinel Farry (A.D. 626-30) [1] who was himself slain in 631.

In 675 Malduin gave an overthrow to the Oirghiallans, at Drum-forgo, where fell their Chief, Donogh.[2]

In 677 he defeated the Picts of Dal Araidhe, and the Keenaght of Glen Given, when their Chiefs, Dungal, son of Scannal, and Cenfala, son of Sweeny, were burned to death in the fort of Dun Cethren—now the Giant's Sconce, in the parish of Dunboe, in the north of Londonderry—where they appear to have fled for refuge.[3]

The following winter, however, he was vanquished by the Keenaght, aided by Flan Fin, or the Fair, son of Maltuil, whom he succeeded in 699.

[1] *Four Masters.* [2] *Idem.* [3] *Id.*

In 706[1] he contested the High-kingship with Congal, son of Fergus of Fanad, Chief of Tyrconnell, by whom he was defeated, and slain, at the battle of Lethairbhe, where his father fell. He was succeeded by his son, Fergal, who was elected heir apparent, or Tanist, to Congal, in accordance with the law of Tanistry, or succession, of which, with some other matters needing explanation, we shall give a short sketch in the next chapter.

[1] *Id.*

NOTES.

(*a*) On the authority of the *Life of St. Columba*, written by, or for, O'Donnell, Prince of Tyrconnell in 1542. This Life makes the O'Donnell's ancestor, the above Anmire—the only High king of their line—the donor, a statement utterly devoid of truth. It did not escape the notice of Petrie, who in his history of the parish (Templemore) in the *Ordnance Memoir*, says: "There is every reason to believe that it was a fabrication of that biographer, or some of the bards of his house to support their claims to the possession of Derry and Inishowen." It is quite on a par with the statement in the *Book of Fenagh*, another Cinel Conal publication, that Conal Gulban "was first King of Tara, and he gave the loan of the kingship to Leary. He gave half of Ulster to himself alone, and the other half to his brothers." According to this Book the territory conquered by Eoghan extended "from Srubh Bran to Glas n-Enncha," that is from Shruve, or Shreeve point in Inishowen, par. Lr. Moville, to probably the Errity river. Cinel Conal, according to the same authority, extended from Rosguill in the north of Donegal, about 8 miles west of Lough Swilly, "westwards to Eas Ruadh," or Ballyshannon. This even would leave Cinel Conal many miles from Derry, as we know from the Annals it was, for Inishowen and Raphoe, in Donegal, up to a very late period—the 14th century—was ruled by the Princes of Aileach.

O'Donnell's *Life of Columba*, written in a large vellum folio, is preserved in the Bodleian Library at Oxford. It has not yet been printed. It is said to comprise everything written or handed down by tradition concerning the Saint. Some of the stories were deemed so extravagant even by Colgan that he omitted them in his own compilation. The copy used by him (about 1630) a beautiful vellum written for Nail O'Neill in the 16th century, is now to be seen in the Library of the Franciscans in Dublin.

(*b*) He prayed thus, it is said, when Dermot's wizards set up a magic barrier between the two armies. This was broken by Tuatan, great son of Cormac, son of Eoghan, who was the only man slain on Columba's side.

(*c*) The Picts of Dal Araidhe, now part of Down and Antrim, who traced their pedigree in the female line, derived from Lancada, daughter of Eochy Eocbhoeil, a Pict of North Britain.—O'Donovan: Note *Four Masters*.

(*d*) The territory of Magh Elne, according to Dr. Reeves, was bounded on the east by the Bush, and west by the Bann.

(*e*) Keating's *History*. In *Silva Gadelica*, Bridget, mother of Hugh of the Ague, is made daughter of Orca, or Forca, son of Carthan, who was son of Eric.

CHAPTER V.

SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS—THE TRIBAL SYSTEM, LAWS AND CUSTOMS, ETC.

O a modern student of ancient Irish life, perhaps nothing seems stranger than the tribal system—the western survival of the original form adopted by all tribes of the Aryan race—which existed in Ireland till the end of the sixteenth century, and in the Highlands of Scotland till the eighteenth.

THE TRIBE AND THE CHIEF.—The tribe was composed of several Septs and Clans, or Houses, and claimed, like the subordinate groups, to be descended from a common ancestor. But inasmuch as strangers were often adopted into all the groups—the tribe not only absorbing individuals, but smaller tribes—there was much admixture, and the theory of common descent became a fiction, save for the leading families—the landowners—of the tribe, who carefully preserved their pedigrees; for under the tribal system no one possessed lawfully any portion of the soil inhabited by his tribe if he were not of the same race as the chief. All these genealogies were entered in the local books (*a*) of each tribe; and

up to this were scrutinized at the great convention or Feis of Tara, which, as mentioned in Chapter I., was held triennially.

There was no incentive to action among the early Irish so stimulative as a remembrance of their pedigree. It was the same among the Welsh, and probably among all Celtic tribes.

The tribe-names, (*b*) which also applied to the territories, were formed by prefixing to the name of the progenitor of the tribe, either Cinel, Clan, Siol, Dal, Teallach, Muintir, or Sliocht, as Cinel, or occasionally, Siol Eoghan, Dal Riada, and Dal Cas—the tribe name of the O'Briens. Muintir Luney, a Sept of the Cinel Main; Teallach Ainbhith—the tribe-name of the M'Rorys of Ardstraw. Sliocht, or Slut, as it is anglicised, or pronounced, applied to different branches of the O'Neills in later times, as Slut Henry; Slut Neal, etc. Names formed by affixing Acht or Icht, as Conn-acht; Cian-acht; and by adding the name of the territory to Fir, or Feara, as Fir Droma,—or O'Donnellys—in Cinel Eoghan, and Fir na Craobh, or men of the branch—the tribe-name of the O'Cahans—are much rarer.

Each Sept, or Clan, composing the tribe, was governed by a Chief, who was subject to the chief of the tribe, called a Ri, or King.

A great tribe like the Cinel Eogan—the greatest of all the Milesian tribes—was composed of several sub-tribes, as the Cinel Farry; Cinel Binne; Cinel

Main; Cinel Enda; Ciannachta of Glen Given and many others mentioned in the succeeding chapters, and in the extract from the *Book of Rights*, Chapter II.

The right to the chieftainship, or kingship, of the tribe, was confined to the members of the original family which was descended from the assumed founder of the tribe; but the individual who was to bear the office was chosen from the members of the ruling house by the general body of the tribe itself. He might be a brother of the ruling chief, a son, a nephew, or a cousin—sometimes a very distant one, too—but in Cinel Eoghan, more often than not, the eldest son succeeded.

To an early state of society, as Dr. Richey remarks (*History of Ireland*), the rule of primogeniture was inapplicable, and at a time when the security of the community depended upon the military qualities of the chief, the minority of the ruler was considered as impossible.

Of the mode of election Dr. Richey writes: "The office was hereditary in so far as it was confined to the members of the sacred house; but elective in so far as with the body of the tribe lay the selection of the eldest and most able member.

"The term 'election,' however, must be used in a modified form; the idea of different candidates being nominated, and the result determined by the counting of votes never was conceived by an

early Celtic tribe. If an assembly was held for any public purpose the result was obtained by the consensus of the whole body in some definite conclusion. The vote of the assembly was the public and official declaration of what had silently been determined. Some one man of the house had already been accepted as the eldest and most able, or possessed such preponderating influence by his retainers and partisans, that he assumed a position which was his own in fact, and obtained a legal ratification from the public assembly; but if there were two competitors, both numerously supported by their respective factions, the result was determined simply by an appeal to force, of which the recorded instances are numerous."

Often, with the object of avoiding the evils of a disputed succession, the successor to the chief was elected during his lifetime. He (the successor) was then called the Tanist, a word meaning second, *i.e.*, second in authority, for, though inferior to the chief, he was above all the other dignitaries of the state. He had his own retinue, and had a separate maintenance and establishment.

Spenser, in his *View of the State of Ireland*, written about the year 1596, says that "the Tanist hath also a share of the country allotted unto him, and certain cuttings and spendings upon all the inhabitants under the lord."

The mensal lands of the "lord" were only held

for life, or during the time he held the chieftainship. On his death or resignation, these lands, with the fortress or fortresses appertaining to the same, passed to the Tanist, or his successor, just as Aileach and Inishowen passed to the Princes of Aileach, or as Tara with its appurtenances formerly passed to the High-kings.

The High-kings had sovereignty over the provincial kings, who were elected from the chiefs or princes of the great tribes, of whom there were at this time three or four in each province.

In Ulster: the Cinel Eoghan—ruled by the O'Neills, whose territory up to the close of the 13th century included, as observed, the present Co.'s Tyrone and Londonderry, with the Baronies of Raphoe and Inishowen in Donegal, and some small parts of the neighbouring Co.'s of Antrim, Armagh, Monaghan, and Fermanagh.

Cinel Conal—ruled by the O'Maldoreys and their co-relatives, the O'Canannans, and in later times by the O'Donnells—included Donegal, minus the above baronies.

Arghialla, or Oriel, inhabited by the descendants of the Collas, was ruled by the O'Carrols and O'Hegnys. Up to the 13th century it included Fermanagh, Monaghan, Armagh, and Louth. According to the *Battle of Magh Rath* it extended from the mouth of the river Drowes, flowing from Lough Melvin into Donegal Bay, to the

Mouth of the Boyne. Haverty, in his *History of Ireland*, and Dr. Healy in his *Ancient Schools* have Fermanagh—which got its name from the Fera Manac, a Leinster sept settled there—marked as a separate territory. But up to the middle of the 13th century it was in Oriel, and the O'Hegnys, Princes of Oriel, were also chiefs of Fermanagh.

Ulidia, which included Antrim and Down, was inhabited by the ancient Ultonians of the line of Heremon and Ir. It was ruled by the M'Dunlevys of the tribe called the Dal Fatachs. Fergus Black Tooth, mentioned in Chapter I., was the last High-king of this tribe; and from him M'Dunlevy traced his pedigree. Fergus is recorded to have been the fourth in descent from King Fatach (*a quo* Dal Fatach) and the eighth from Eochy, whose brother was the progenitor of the Dal Riadans. Their territory included the northern part of Antrim from the Slemish mountain. The Dal Fatach and Dal Riadans were Heremonians. The Irians were known as the Dal Araidhe, and their territory, according to the *Book of Ballymote*, extended from Slemish to Newry, and from the sea to Linn Duachaill, which O'Donovan took to be Magheralin in the west of Down. The O'Loingsighs and O'Lalors were chiefs of this territory. In the 14th century Dal Araidhe,—named from Fiacha Araidhe, King of Ulster, progenitor of the tribe,—was ruled by the Princes of Clanaboy.

These four tribes, or principalities—Cinel Eoghan, Cinel Conal, Ulidia, and Oriel—were composed of several sub-tribes, ruled by their own chiefs, or lords, whose territories varied in extent. The smallest division having a complete legal and political administration was the Tuath, whose chief, according to the Brehon Laws, should furnish 700 warriors. All Ulster contained 35 of these Tuaths, or 24,500 warriors. The Tuath, according to Dr. Joyce (*Soc. Hist.*), contained 30 ballys, or townlands, and 43,200 large Irish acres.

In Ulster, the Princes of Aileach, and down to the 9th century, of Cinel Conal, ruled alternately. The Ulidians, however, appear to have maintained their independence till the reign of Malduin, son of Hugh Allan II., who reduced them to subjection.

The provincial kings were bound to attend the High-king in war and pay him tribute, but in most cases the authority of the supreme monarch over the provincial kings was only nominal, like that of the early Bretwaldas over the kings of the Saxon Heptarchy. (*c*)

The authority of the king, or chief, over his own tribesmen rested chiefly upon the fact that he represented and embodied the will of the community. So long as he was capable and popular, he was supported in any act in accordance with public opinion. If he became incompetent or unpopular, like Murkertac, Prince of Aileach, the last King of

Ireland of the Hy Nial race, his tenure of office and his life would be in peril, and he would be expelled by some other member of his family with the approbation of the community.

The chief foundation of the power of the chief lay in the possession by him of his mensal lands on which were quartered his followers—men not members of the tribe—strangers, fugitives and retainers—men having no political status or legal rights save through and under their lord—his clients —a hostile force quartered thus within and overawing the tribe, and ultimately, in the later Irish history, superseding it.

The mensal lands of Tara, which were never distributed or cultivated, according to an ancient poem mentioned by O'Curry (*Manners and Customs*) consisted of seven ballys or townlands ; and though the palace was now deserted, the lands, most probably, were retained by the High-kings, as even in the 11th century we read of Brian Boru having his high steward in Meath, where at least two O'Neill kings—Nial Glunduff and his grandson, Donal O'Neill, appear to have had a fortress.(*d*)

The mensal lands and subsidies were the main sources from which the revenue of the chief was derived.

The subsidies which the Princes of Aileach received from their sub-chiefs are set forth in the extract from the *Book of Rights*, Chapter II., with

the stipends which, by a curious custom, they were bound to give in return.

The acceptance of this gift, which was called a *taurcrec*, was an acknowledgment of vassalage. Sometimes in the case of a lower order of dependents, the stipends were called *raith* or wages. Thus in 1154 Murtagh, Prince of Aileach, and King of Ireland having received the submission of the Danes of Dublin, gave them as wages 1,200 cows, now, at £13 a cow, equivalent to about £15,600.

The payments, as may be observed, were always made in kind. When horned cattle were given one third should be oxen. Though gold and silver were abundant in ancient Ireland and coins were in use (see Chap. 13) the ox, or cow, was the general standard of value, being equivalent to an ounce of gold.[1]

Cattle formed one of the principal articles of wealth of the inhabitants. Pigs (*e*) came next, and the chiefs, as well as the rich farmers, kept great herds, which fed in the forests which abounded everywhere. In the remote forests there were wild pigs, and Giraldus, in the 12th century says that "in no part of the world are such vast herds of boars and wild pigs to be found."

Deer, wild pigs, badgers, otters, and wolves, were the principal kinds of game. Hares and foxes were hunted with beagles; and the larger and more

[1] Joyce's *Social History of Ireland.*

dangerous game with the celebrated wolf hounds "bigger of bone and limb than a colt."

The wolves were very numerous in the 16th century, and increased enormously during the wars of Elizabeth and became bolder and fiercer. In various parts of the country organized efforts were made to keep them down, and once a week a party under the chief made a regular raid on them.

VARIOUS RANKS.—Next to the Kings or Chiefs, were the *Flaiths* or nobles, of whom there were seven grades. After them came the Freemen with property. Then Freemen without property, or with very little; and lastly the non-free classes who had no votes.

The Aire-desa was the lowest rank of noble; and the Aire-forgail the highest, ranking next to the Tanist. One of his functions was that of determining the qualifications, privileges and rights of the suitors of the court, and the various public functionaries. He was the prototype of the Cancellarius Regis of mediæval states; and received as taurcrec from the chief, nine cumhals, or about £350. Every king had his Aire-forgail as well as the High King.

In the *Pipe Rolls* 12 Henry II., 1165-6, appears a payment of £4 7s. 1d. to the "Chancellor of the King of Ireland" who at that time was Murtagh, Prince of Aileach, the last Hy Nial King of Ireland.

The Aire-echtai, who ranked next to the Aire-desa,

was the King's Master of the Horse, and commander of the permanent military levy of the territory. He corresponded to the Constabularius Regis of the Anglo-Saxons. In later times a branch of the M'Donnells held this office in Cinel Eoghan.

The property of the Freemen consisted chiefly of cattle and movable goods, hence they were called Bo-aires, or Cow-aires. They included the gentry, and farmers or graziers, and corresponded to the Saxon *Thanes*, and Norman *Franklins*.

Belonging to this class was the Aire-cosring called the "King's Champion," who represented the executive authority of the Chief in assemblies of the people, and courts, which he had authority to summon. The Aire-cosring is now represented by the County Sheriff. When a Freeman took stock from the Chiefs or nobles he, in a sense, lost caste; and when obliged for some reason to give security for the stock he was called a bond-tenant, simply because he forfeited some of his rights as a Freeman, otherwise he was called a Free-tenant. The Bo-aires were nearly all tenants to the Chiefs or nobles. Each had a house of his own, a right to a share of the tribe land, and to the use of the commons.

An interesting official of the Bo-aire class was the Brughfer, or Biatagh, who was a public hospitaller, bound to keep an open house for the reception of strangers, for which purpose he received a furnished

house, with a tract of arable land, free of rent, called a Baile-biatagh, or Ballybetagh, which was equivalent to about 1000 of our present English acres.

His house, which answered all the purposes of a modern hotel, or inn,—with the important distinction that everything was to be had free of charge—was situated generally at the cross-roads; and in his lawn at night he was bound to keep a light burning to guide travellers. Keating says that there were ninety of these houses in Ulster.

The chiefs, according to the Brehon code, were bound to entertain a guest "without asking any questions," as to his business or destination; but the lower classes might make reasonable inquiry.

The non-free people were of three classes—the *Bothach*, the *Sencleithe*, and the *Fudir*—all poor and dependent. The persons belonging to the first two were herdsmen, labourers, squatters on waste lands, horse boys, dog boys, hangers-on, and jobbers of various kinds. They were part of the tribe and had the right to live within the territory and to support themselves by their labour. The *Fudirs*, the lowest of the three, were generally strangers or fugitives, and as they were permitted a settlement by the grace of the chief — being quartered on his demesne lands — they were reckoned as part of his family. Any Freeman could give evidence against a *Fudir*, but he could

not give evidence in reply. St. Patrick—while in captivity in Slemish in Ulidia—was a *Fudir.*

The professional classes in ancient Ireland occupied much the same position that they do at present. The Ollave (*Ollamh*) or man of learning had a standing income of 21 cows and their grass (about £300) from the chief of the district in which he lived. A fugitive who fled to him for protection was free from injury, or arrest, for the time, once his wand of office was carried around and over him.

The Shanachy (*Seanchaide*), or historian, who was also a genealogist and antiquarian, was attached to the household of the chief; and like the bards, or poets, was skilled in reciting stories for the amusement of his guests.

The poets (*Fileas*), or bards, as they are called, were much esteemed, and their praise was eagerly sought after, and liberally rewarded; and many places in Ireland, named from them, indicate the lands which they held (*f*)—as a reward for their professional services,—or the places where they resided, as Derry-bard, near Fintona in Tyrone, and Ballyward, or townland of the bard. The O'Gnives, M'Namees, O'Donnellys, and others, literal translations of whose poems are given in this work, were hereditary bards in Cinel Eoghan; as were the M'Wards (Mac-an-Bhaird, *i.e.*, son of the bard) and O'Clerys, the chief compilers of the *Four Masters*, in Cinel Conal, in later times.

The bards were a very irritable race and could compose an *aer* or satire, which was believed to have some preternatural influences for mischief. In the time of Colman the Celebrated, they were so numerous and exacting in their claims that they became an intolerable burden. So confident were they of the influence which their satirical powers had over the acts of all classes, that in 570 a company of them waited on Hugh M'Anmire, the High-king, and threatened to satirize him if he did not give them the Royal Brooch, which, from the remotest times, according to O'Curry (*Manners and Customs*) descended from Monarch to Monarch of Erin, and which is recorded to have been worn as the chief distinctive emblem of the legitimate sovereigns (*g*). Hugh had not the moral courage to refuse so audacious a demand, but, in 574, at a great convention held at Drum-cete,—now called Mullagh, or Daisy Hill, near Limavady—in Cinel Eoghan, at which all the provincial kings attended to discuss the question of the independence of Scottish Dal Riada; the imprisonment of Scanlan, Prince of Ossory,—who was confined by Hugh (*h*) in Aileach,—and other matters, it was proposed by Hugh to suppress the order altogether; but at the intercession of St. Columba, a middle course was adopted, and their numbers were greatly reduced and strict rules were laid down for the regulation of their conduct in future. (*i*)

The classification and the laws of Irish versification were probably the most complicated that ever were invented. Dr. Atkinson believes Irish verse to have been about the most perfectly harmonious combination of sounds that the world has ever known; and Zeuss and other great Celtic scholars maintain that rhyme, now so common in all European languages, originated with the old Irish poets; and that from the Irish it was adopted into the Latin, from which it gradually penetrated to other languages till it finally spread over all Europe.

Dr. Hyde in his *Literary History of Ir.*, gives English translations of many old Irish poems in which the rhymes, metres, and alliterations of the originals are exactly imitated. Dr. Sigerson, in his *Bards of Gael and Gall*, also often imitates the old rhymes and alliterations.

Spenser, the English poet, says of the bardic poetry in the 16th century: "I have caused divers of them to be translated unto me, that I might understand them, and surely they savour of sweet wit and good invention."

HOUSES.—The fortresses of the Chiefs, around which were built the towns and villages, were called Raths, or Duns. The former was a simple circular wall, or enclosure of raised earth enclosing a space, of more or less extent, on which stood the residence of the chief and sometimes the dwellings

of one or more officers, or chief men of his Court. Sometimes a rath consisted of two or three concentric walls or circumvallations.

The Dun was of the same form as the Rath, consisting of at least two concentric circular mounds, or enclosures with a deep trench full of water between them. These were often encircled by a third, or even by a greater number, at increasing distances.

A stone Rath was called a Caiseal, or Cashel; and a Cathair, or Cahir, was a stone Dun with stronger and loftier walls. Aileach, "the senior of the buildings of Erin," as an old poet calls it, was a great Rath, or Cahir; and from Petrie's poem given in the *Ordinance Memoir of Londonderry* it appears that not only was the outer Rath, or protecting circle, built of stone, but that the palace itself and other houses within the enclosure, requisite for the establishment of the king, were built also of stone, chipped and cut. Some of these buildings were probably circular, like the "Prison House," which, according to Petrie's poem, was "closed at the top with one stone." These dome-shaped buildings, formed of dry masonry having each stone over-lapping the other and terminating in a single stone, were called Cloghans. The palace and other large buildings could not obviously have been of this description.

Instead of apartments, the chief and the members

of his family had distinct houses within the Rath, Dun, or Cahir, as well as houses for the reception of strangers and visitors, and for other purposes.

The dwellings of the Irish at this period were apparently much superior to those of the Anglo-Saxons, whose cathedrals and palaces were built chiefly of wood, so badly jointed, that towards the close of the ninth century we read of the great King Alfred making lanterns to protect his candles from the draughts that swept through the chinks of his palace walls.

The Normans used the same primitive kind of houses as the Irish before the 13th century. Giraldus describes the original Castle of Pembroke as "a slender fortress of stakes and turf," and Clarke, in his *Mediaeval Military Architecture*, shows that many of the Norman castles, both noble and royal, of that age, were built chiefly of wood.

Many of the Duns in Cinel Eoghan, the remains of which may still be seen, retain their names, though somewhat anglicised, as Dunbo, Dunglady, Dun Ceithrin, Dungannon, etc.

The mixed character of the Irish chief, at one time representing his tribe and at another dominating it by the aid of his personal retainers, half a popular ruler, and half a tyrant, is clearly intimated in a passage in the *Crith Gabhlach*, a law tract (given in the appendix to O'Curry's *Manners and*

Customs) which describes the arrangement of the chief's house.

At the south side of the hall stand the King's guards, behind them stands one of the hostages, taken from the members of subject tribes, to protect the King against the treachery of his guardsmen, who were generally a bad lot. The hostage was a man of means, and his property, as a security, was deposited in the hands of the King, or chief.

On his right hand sat the guests, poets and harpers; along the east wall his flute players, horn blowers, clowns and jugglers; at the north end, facing the chief his champion; and at the door a "man of deeds." The two latter armed, to keep the door, and against the confusion of the Ale-house. On the east side sat the hostages and brehons; and at the king's right hand his wife. The unredeemed hostages in chains were posted at the N.E. end of the room, on the right of the champion's chair.

The general aspect of the hall was not very unlike that of a baronial castle in the middle ages; but the presence of the strange personal guards; and the chained hostages, implies a state of society which can only be paralleled in the pages of Gregory of Tours. In the 16th century O'Neill, as Prince of Aileach, alone, could reckon on 4,000 foot, 1,000 horse, 900 household troops—700 foot and 200 horse—and 120 guardsmen. (*j*)

THE BREHON LAWS.—The ancient laws of Ireland, now commonly known as the Brehon Laws, prevailed in Ireland from the earliest times down to the reign of James I. The Judges, or Brehons, as they were called, were an influential class, and those attending princes and chiefs had free lands for their maintenance, which, like the profession itself, remained in the family for generations. In Cinel Eoghan the O'Hagans of Clan Fergus—now represented by Lord O'Hagan—were the chief hereditary "law-givers," or Brehons.

St. Cairnech of Dulane, the first "Bishop of Clan Neill," was also the first Christian Chief Brehon of Ireland, as Amergin, brother of Heremon, according to the *Book of Leinster*, was the first pagan; and some small fragments of legal decisions ascribed to him (Amergin) are found in our oldest MSS.

King Cormac did much to encourage the systematic study of law among the Brehons; and may be regarded as the author of the earliest code of laws in pagan Ireland.

In the introduction to the *Book of Aicill* (*Brehon Laws*, Vol. 3), which professes to be a compilation of his, it is stated that "the place of writing this book is Aicill (now the Hill of Skreen) close to Teamhair (Tara), and its time is the time of Coirpri Lifechair (Carbery of the Liffey), son of Cormac, and the cause of its having been composed was the

blinding of the eye of Cormac;" and "Cormac was sent out to be cured at Aicill . . . and the sovereignty of Erin was given to Coirpri Lifechair, son of Cormac; for it was prohibited that any king with a personal blemish should reign at Tara."

The Brehon Laws appear to have been in great part handed down from time immemorial, like the common law of England, to which they bear a certain resemblance. In the reign of King Leary they were committed to writing after certain precepts had been expurgated which did not agree with the teaching of the New Testament.

Many of the laws concerning the division of property, fosterage, and the ordinary relations of life are very curious and interesting, as the following example will suffice to show:

Take the "Law of Distress."

This was the principle on which damages could be recovered. In case of theft or loan not returned the plaintiff might serve a notice on the defendant; and if this were not attended to, he could then distrain or seize his cattle (for example) and put them in a pound. Then the matter would be brought before one of the Brehons, who always acted as arbitrators in such disputes. If the defendant did not appear, the plaintiff was awarded the cattle, and to this judgment the defendant had to submit without demur, though the only executive authority

behind the Brehon, was the traditional obedience and good sense of the people.

In some cases before distress was resorted to, a curious custom came into play. The plaintiff fasted on the defendant; and this method was always necessary before distress when the defendant was of chieftain grade. It was done this way: the plaintiff having given due notice went to the house of the defendant, and sitting before his door remained there without food till the defendant yielded.

The fasting process was regarded with a sort of superstitious awe; and it was considered outrageously disgraceful for a defendant not to submit to it.

This process was employed by St. Ruadhan to secure the release of Hugh Guaire, who had been taken prisoner by King Dermod, as mentioned in the last chapter.

In the *Book of Lismore*, the following particulars of this historic fast is given: SS. Ruadhan and Brendan, and other clerics, came to Tara and fasted on Dermod, who "relying on his kingly quality and on the justice of his cause, fasts upon them;" and "in such fashion and to the end of a year they continued before Tara under Ruadhan's tent exposed to weather and wet; and they were every other night, without food, Diarmaid and the clergy fasting on each other."

Dermod, weary of fasting, prepares a feast for the clerics, "and assigned people to keep watch and ward over them, until the clergy should have accomplished the act of eating and consuming food in their presence. But Brendan on this night gave them this advice: their cowls to be about their heads, and they to let their meat and ale pass by their mouths into their bosoms and down to the ground. And this they did, and word was brought to the King that the clergy were consuming meat and ale, so Diarmaid ate meat that night, but the clerics fasted on him through strategy."

Now Dermod's wife, Mughain, had a certain dream and "after that dream he (Dermod) arose early so that he heard the clergy chant their psalms; and he entered into the house in which they were. 'Alas,' he said, 'for the iniquitous contest ye have waged against me, seeing that it is for Ireland's good that I pursue and to preserve discipline and royal right, but 'tis Ireland's unpeace and murderousness ye are after. For God Himself it is that confers on such and such a one, the orders of prince, of righteous ruler, and of equitable judgments.'"

He then said: "The thing (*i.e.*, the man) about which is our dispute take him with you, but in thy church, Ruadhan, may the alarm cry sound at nones always and ever, though all Ireland be at peace be thy Church's precinct a scene of war continuously."

"From that time to this," says the old chronicler, who had little sympathy with the clerics, "the same is fulfilled."

Another, but probably more justifiable instance of the clergy fasting upon a lay ruler, was that of the notorious Raghallach (Reilly), King of Connacht, whose exploits are recorded by Keating in his *History*. The institution of fasting on a debtor is still widely diffused in the East; and the Hindoos believe that if the plaintiff die of starvation the defendant is sure to be visited by fearful supernatural penalties.

On the death of the High-king, or of the Archbishop of Armagh, debtors were exempted from payment for a year. On the death of the provincial king, the people of the province were exempt for three months; and on the death of a Chief, the tribesmen were exempt for a month. Every King, or Chief, could, during his lifetime, give exemption for as long a period as would be given at his death.

Another curious feature of the Brehon Code was that no capital punishment was recognized. In case of murder the murderer had to pay a heavy fine in compensation to the friends and relations of the murdered man in order to remove any desire for vengeance.

In the preface to the *Seanchas Mor*, or *Brehon Laws*, it is stated that before the arrival of St.

Patrick there was no mercy or composition in case of wilful murder, but death was paid with death, as under the ancient Hebrew Laws. He, however, in the spirit of the Gospel, introduced the law of eric, the amount of which was fixed by the Brehon. If this were not paid the murderer might be lawfully killed.

Some say the eric was substituted for *lex talionis* by King Felimy the Lawgiver, though, indeed, his father Tool the Legitimate exacted the greatest *eric* mentioned in history. This was the tax called the Boroma, which the Lagenians were obliged to pay during the reign of forty monarchs.

The eric was also paid for bodily injury of any kind, and in the *Tripartite Life* (*see* Chap. II.), Eoghan, Prince of Aileach, mentions that his brothers gave a great eric for his ugliness, which means, apparently, that they spoiled his beauty on some memorable occasion.

In the 16th century the inhabitants of Carrickfergus paid a tribute to the O'Neills of Clanaboy—for the loss of their prince, Brian Ballagh—which was known as "Brian Ballagh's Eric."

The principle of compensation for murder or injury was not confined to Ireland, for it existed among the Anglo-Saxons (as the weregild), as well as the ancient Greeks, Franks and Germans; and as a German institution it is mentioned with approval by Tacitus.

FOSTERAGE.—One of the leading features of Irish social life was fosterage, which was practised by all classes, but more especially by those in the higher ranks. A man sent his child to be reared and educated in the home, and ith the family, of another member of the tribe, who then became foster-father, and his children the foster-brothers and foster-sisters of the child. Giraldus says: "if the Irish have any feeling of love or attachment it is all spent on the foster-children and foster-brothers."

A child might be sent to fosterage at one year of age, and boys might be kept till seventeen, and girls till fourteen, which were considered the marriageable ages. They then returned to their parents' house; and in after life were sometimes known by the additional name of the district in which they were fostered, as Carbery Lifechair, Fiacha Sravtene; Murtagh O'Neill of Moylinny; Tirlo Luineach; Niall Conallach, etc. Many of these names will be met with as we go along.

A chief generally sent his child to be fostered by one of his own sub-chiefs, who had the sons instructed in horsemanship, archery, swimming, chess-playing and in the use of the sword and spear. The daughters were taught sewing, cutting-out, and embroidery. The sons of chiefs were generally educated at the public schools. But in the case of chiefs of high rank, the young princes were educated at home.

The teacher then resided at court, and took rank with the highest. Sometimes in after life, the pupil availed of his former master's wisdom, by making him his chief counsellor, or prime minister, as was the case with Fothad na Canoine, of St. Mura's Monastery in Inishowen, and his pupil King Hugh the Dignified (Ordnee), for whom he is said to have written an inaugural poem of instruction, which is still extant.

Ireland at this period, and till the arrival of the Danes, was famous for its schools and scholars, and was the splendid centre and source of whatever learning and civilisation existed in Europe.

St. Mura's, or Othan Mura, and Derry, in Cinel Eoghan ; Armagh in Arghialla, or Oriel ; and Bangor in Ulidia, where 3,000 monks resided, were the great schools of Ulster. So many English were attracted to Armagh in this (seventh) century, that the city was divided into three wards, or thirds, one of which was called the Saxon third ; and here, most probably, Alfrid, King of Northumbria, and his distinguished countrymen, SS. Egbert, and Chad, Bishop of Lichfield ; and Willibrord, Archbishop of Utrecht, were educated. In this century also, Dagobert II. King of France, or Austrasia, spent nearly twenty years in the School of Slane, in the territory of the Southern Hy Nials.[1]

[1] *Ireland's Ancient Schools and Scholars*, by Dr. Healy.

NOTES.

(*a*) *See* Dr. Hyde's *Literary History* for a list of some of these works. Dr. Hyde believes that Irish genealogical books were kept from the introduction of the art of writing, with greater accuracy than any other records of the past whatsoever.

(*b*) *See* O'Donovan's *Essay on Irish Names* in the *Dublin Penny Journal*.

(*c*) The Kings of the Heptarchy were at constant war among themselves, and the bounds of the seven states were always changing. The King who for the time had the ascendancy was called Bretwalda, a word meaning "powerful king."—Collier's *History of England*.

(*d*) Nial Glunduff, according to tradition, resided at Rath More, or the Great Rath, near Trim; and in 969, according to the Annalists, Donal was driven out of Meath by the southern Hy Nials.

(*e*) *Apropos* of the Irish liking for swine's flesh, Stanihurst tells a good story: "No meat," says he, "they fansie so much as pork, and the fatter the better. One of John O'Nels (Shane O'Neill's) household, demanded of his fellow whether beef were better than pork, 'that,' quoth the other, 'is as intricate a question as to ask whether thou art better than O'Neill.'"

(*f*) In Cinel Conal, Dr. Hyde (*Literary History*) believes, the income derived by the bards from their lands amounted to £2,000.

(*g*) The brooch, of gold or silver, was worn on the breast or shoulder. Some of extreme size and weight, covered the whole breast. Among the collections of brooches in the National Museum are two, 22 and 20 inches long respectively. The Tara and Inishowen brooches are about the best known specimens. The latter was found in Inishowen, and the former, pictured in Joyce's *Social History*, when found near Drogheda in 1850, was sold by its finder, an old woman, to a shopkeeper of the town for nine pence. It was purchased by the Royal Irish Academy for £500.

(*h*) This Hugh M'Anmire seems to have resided in Aileach, of which he evidently had a loan, as he is the only Cinel Conal Chief mentioned in connection with the fortress. In the *Battle of Magh Rath* it is stated that Donal the son of Hugh, built a royal palace at Dun na n-Ged in imitation of Tara.

(*i*) On this occasion, in gratitude, Dallan Forgaill, the Chief Poet, composed his celebrated Amra Columcille, or Elegy, which

has been translated and edited by Mr. O'Beirne Crow. The memory of the Convention was preserved by pilgrimages and processions on All Saints' Day down to the 17th century according to Colgan.

(*j*) Camden (*Britannia*) says when Prince Shane saw that he was able to levy of his own followers 1,000 horse, and 4,000 foot and had a guard of 700 men, he disdained English titles "in comparison of the name of O'Neill, and vaunted himself to be King of Ulster." Fynes Moryson says that Hugh, the last prince of Cinel Eogan, and Ulster, levied, during his war, taxes in Ulster amounting to £80,000 per annum.

CHAPTER VI.

FERGAL KING OF IRELAND SL. 718.—HUGH ALLAN II SL. 738.—NIAL THE SHOWERY OB. 773.

ERGAL, son of Maeldun and Cacht, daughter (or grand-daughter) of Maelcova, Prince of Tyrconnell,[1] and High King,—son of Hugh M'Anmire, and brother of King Donal who founded the celebrated Abbey of Cong,—was elected Prince of Aileach after his father's death, and chosen as heir apparent to Congal.

In that year—703 according to the *Chronicon Scotorum*—he, with Fergal, son of Loingseach, Prince of Tyrconnel, engaged the Connacians and slew their King, Indreachtach. Early in his reign, or in 705, died St. Adamnan, son of Ronan, the kinsman and biographer of St. Columba and a lineal descendant of the great Nial. Adamnan presided for many years over the monastery of Raphoe in Cinel Eoghan, founded by St. Columba, some time in the reign of Donal and Fergus, from whom doubtless he had a grant of the lands.

The church is said to have been afterwards converted into a Cathedral by St. Eunan, of whom

[1] Keating's *History*.

little is known, and who is said to have been its first Bishop. The Bishops of Cinel Conal after the 12th century took their title from this place. Some think Eunan and Adamnan the same person.

Adamnan, who presided over the monastery as Abbot till 679, when he was raised to the supreme government of the whole Columbian Order in Ireland and the Hebrides, is reckoned, next to Columba, the greatest saint of the northern Hy Nials. One of his warmest admirers was Alfrid, King of Northumbria who, as we have remarked, on the death of his father Oswy, the Bretwalda, took shelter in Ireland, with his relatives, where, as Bede (*Ecclesiastical History*) testifies, he applied himself diligently to study till he was recalled and placed on the throne of Northumbria after the death of Egfrid.

Adamnan, in addition to his *Life of St. Columba*, from which we have given some extracts, wrote, according to Ware, a treatise on the Holy Land, from which Bede took many extracts; a *Life of St. Patrick;* a *Collection of Epistles and Poems;* a *Monastic Rule;* a *Book of Canons*, extant in the Cottonian Library; and a treatise on the proper celebration of the feast of the Passover.

Like a true Hy Nial he favoured—according to the story at least—the imposition of the Boruma which was the cause of such contention at this period, and led to the death of Fergal.

Fergal succeeded Congal, son of Fergus of Fanad, as High King in 709. In 715 he celebrated the Fair of Tailtin which was disturbed by his successor, Fogarty, son of Neill and grandson of Cearnaigh of the race of Hugh Slain, whom he banished to Britain; for it was one of the rules laid down to govern all public assemblies that no one at the risk of his life should pick a quarrel, or strike a blow.

In 717 he exacted the Boruma which had been remitted years before by Finnachta the Festive, who is recorded to have destroyed or burned Aileach.

According to the *History of the Boruma*, St. Moling, a Lagenian, obtained the remission of this tax by a singular use of the word *luain* which means Monday, and also the Day of Judgment. In his covenant with the monarch he abolished this tribute—which would now amount to considerably more than £250,000—not till Monday as Finnachta understood it; but till the Day of Judgment as the Saint intended. This equivocation, there is reason to think, had its origin in the fanciful brain of the author of the tract, who displays his own, and not the Saint's morality. The same remark applies to many of the stories told of our Irish saints.

When Adamnan heard how weakly the King had yielded the ancient rights of the Hy-Nials he was very wrathful, and at once sought out the monarch and asked to see him. The King was playing chess, and told Adamnan's messenger, who asked an

interview for the Saint, that he must wait till the game was finished; then he played a second and was going to play a third, when the Saint threatened him with reading a psalm that would not only shorten his life, but exclude him from heaven. Thereupon he came quick enough and at once Adamnan said: "Is this true that thou hast remitted the Borumha?" "It is true," said the King. "Then it is the same as to remit it for ever," said the Saint; and he scolded him in vigorous language, and made a song—or *aer*—on him on the spot, calling him a foolish, white-haired, toothless King and many other things of the same description. In the end, however, "Finnachta placed his head on the bosom of Adamnan and Adamnan forgave him the Borumha," which was again imposed by Fergal.

In 718 the Lagenians, however, refused payment, on which he assembled an army of 21,000 men and marching into Leinster fought the great battle of Allen, in County Kildare, of which the following details are given in the *Revue Celtique* and *Fragments of Annals* :—

King Fergal proceeded on his way (to Leinster). Guides went before him, but the guidance they gave him was not good through the narrowness of each road and the ruggedness of each pass until they reached Cluain Dobhail at Almhain (Allen). And Aedham the Leper of Cluain Dobhail was there before them. The hosts ill-treated him; and they

killed his only cow and roasted it on spits before his face; and they unroofed his house and burned it; and the Leper said that the vengeance which God would wreak on the Hy Niall on his account would be an eternal vengeance; and the Leper came forward to the tent of Fergal, where the Kings of Leth Chuinn (Leh Conn, or the northern half of Ireland) were before him. The Leper complained of the injuries done him in their presence; but the heart of none of them was moved except the heart of Cubretan, son of the King of the Feara Ros (*a*); and for this Cubretan had no reason to be sorry, for of all the Kings who were in the tent, none escaped the battle except Cubretan alone. Then Fergal said to Donnbo (of the tribe of the Feara Ros) "Show amusement for us, O Donnbo, for thou art the best minstrel in Ireland at pipes, and trumpets, and harps, at the poems and legends and royal tales of Erin; for on to-morrow morning we shall give battle to the Leinstermen." "No," said Donnbo, "I am not able to amuse thee to-night and I am not about to exhibit any more of these feats to-night; but wherever thou shalt be to-morrow, if I be alive, I shall show amusement to thee. But let the royal clown Ua Maighlene amuse thee this night."

With respect to the Leinstermen, they repaired (to the number of 9,000) to Cruachan Claentha (the round hill of Clane), for the Leinstermen would not be defeated if they should hold their Council there,

and proceed from thence to battle. They proceeded thence to Dincannain (Duncannon, between Clane and the hill of Allen) and thence to the battle.

On the following morning the battalions on both sides met. The valorous deeds of the heroes of Leinster and Leth Chuinn are very much spoken of. It is said that Brigid was seen over the Leinstermen; Colum-Cille was seen over the Ui Neill. The battle was gained by Murchadh, son of the King of Leinster. Fergal himself was killed in it; and it was Aedh Menn and Donncadh (son of Murchadh), that slew Fergal himself, and Bile, son of Buan of Albain (Scotland).

Of this battle it was said that:

"It was gained over Fergal of Fail
The son of Maeldun the mighty,
So that mills in the plain did grind
Turned by ponds of red bloodshed."

Seven thousand was the number that fell on both sides, including Fergal and sixty of his guards and ten grandsons of Maelfithric.

Fergal's bard, Rumann, son of Colman, Chief of Hy Leary, "the Virgil of the Gael," in lamentation of him said:

"Fergal has been slain, a man fair, full of wounds
A griffin, a champion, a foe:
There is one wail like thunder
From the Clew Bay islands to Man."

His head was presented to Cathal, son of Finguini, King of Munster, an old enemy of his, who was then at Mount Grud in Tipperary. Cathal, when he saw the head, was grieved, and then he had it washed and the hair plaited and combed smooth "and a cloth of velvet was put round it and seven oxen, seven wethers and seven bacon-pigs—all of them cooked—were brought before the head. Then the head blushed in the presence of all the men of Munster, and it opened its eyes to God to render thanks for the respect and great honour shown it. Then that food was distributed by Cathal to the poor of the neighbouring churches." After which he went with a choice gathering of the men of Munster and gave the head to the O'Neills in Aileach.[1]

Hugh, surnamed Allan, which might mean the Handsome, succeeded his father in Aileach, after the battle of Allan, from which he was one of the few to escape.

In 722 he was worsted at Drumfornacht, near Newry, by Flaherty, son of Loingseach, Chief of Tyrconnell, in a contest for the High-kingship, which was gained by Flaherty.

In this year, likewise, died his clansman, St. Maelrubha, who is still honoured in Scotland. This holy man, Dr. Reeves (*Proceedings Antiq. Scot.*, III., 264) tells us, was the son of Elgana and a lineal

[1] *Revue Celtique.*

descendant of Eoghan, son of Nial. Through his mother Subtan he was nearly related to St. Comgall of Bangor, where he received his early training, and of which, according to some, he was afterwards Abbot. In 671 he left his native land and settled at Apurcrossan in the N. W. of Scotland, where in 673 he founded a church which became the nucleus of a conventual establishment, following the Order of Bangor and for a long period affiliated to it. After a presidency of fifty-one years, during which time he enjoyed a character of great sanctity, he died at Apurcrossan on Tuesday, 21st April, 722. Twenty-one different spots scattered over the west and north of Scotland have been connected in some instances with his name.

In 728 Hugh again gave battle to the Cinel Conal when Flaherty, though reinforced by a fleet from Scottish Dalriada and the Ulidians, was defeated with great loss.[1] Soon after this he resigned the Crown to Hugh and retired to the Monastery of Armagh, where he died in 760. This prince, (*b*) who was the last of the Cinel Conal High-Kings, left two sons, namely, Hugh Red-Neck, ancestor of O'Canannan, Cannon, or Canning; and Maelbrassil ancestor of O'Maldorey, who held the Chieftainship of Tyrconnel alternately, down to the 12th century, when the O'Donnells reigned supreme.

In 732 Hugh was informed of the profanation of

[1] *Fragments of Annals: Four Masters.*

the Church of Cill Cunnai, now Kilcooney, County Tyrone, by his confessor and kinsman, Congus, Archbishop of Armagh, a descendant of King Anmire who, to incite him to chastise Hugh Roin, Prince of Ulidia, the offender, wrote the following lines which he sent to Hugh :

"Say unto the cold Hugh Allan, that I have been oppressed by a feeble army.
Hugh Roin insulted me last night, at Cill Cunnai of the sweet music."

Hugh at once marched into Ulidia, and on his way wrote the following, which he sent to Congus :

"For Cil Cunnai, the Church of my Confessor
I take this day a journey
Hugh Roin shall leave his head with me
Or I shall leave mine with him."

Hugh Roin was taken prisoner at Faughard, County Louth, where he was beheaded on a stone, near the Church, afterwards called the Cloc-an Chommaigh, or Stone of Decapitation.

Some time after this, with a view to augmenting the revenue of the Metropolitan See, Hugh convened an assembly at Terryglass in Ormond, where it was agreed by the provincial kings that in future the four Provinces were to contribute a yearly tax and a law was accordingly passed for that purpose.[1]

[1] Brenan's *Ecclesiastical History of Ireland.*

By an inquisition taken in the reign of Henry VIII. the Monastery of Armagh alone was found to possess upwards of 240 townlands in various counties, with their tithes and alterages, besides other property within the town, seized by Elizabeth, and granted to Sir Toby Caulfield.

In 733 Hugh assembled the forces of Leth Chuinn to proceed into Leinster to revenge the death of his father. Advancing to Ath-Seanaith, now Ballyshannon, County Kildare, Hugh found the Lagenians drawn up ready to receive him. Bloodily and heroically was the battle fought between them both. Heroes were slaughtered and bodies were mutilated, Hugh met Hugh M'Colgan, King of Leinster, in single combat, and slew him, after which the Leinstermen gave way and were finally driven off the field with the loss of 9,000 men.

In the *Annals of Clonmacnoise* this battle is noticed at the year 735 as follows: "The battle of Athseanye on the 14th day of the Kalends of September was cruelly and bloodily fought upon the O'Neales and Lynstermen, where the two kings, head of the two armies did so roughly approach one another, as King Hugh Allan, King of Ireland and King Hugh MacColgan, King of Lynster, whereof the one was sore hurt and lived after; the other by a deadly blow lost his head from the shoulders. The O'Neales, with their king, behaved themselves so valiantly in the pursuit of their enemies, and

killed them so fast in such manner that they made great heapes in the field of their carcasses, so as none or very few of the Lynstermen escaped to bring tidings to their friends at home . . . this was the greatest slaughter for a long time seen in Ireland." Of this battle and the battle of Allen St. Moling prophecied:

"I say unto ye O men of Leinster—
And not for the sake of rich rewards—
Guard well your own territories
An attack will come upon you from afar
Respond ye, for it behoves ye,
To the noble Fergal son of Maelduin.
By you shall fall the brave descendant of Conn
In the furious battle of Almhain
Hugh Allan, with his battalions
Will come from the north to avenge his father
Here he will be met by Hugh Menn
Who shall be left dead at Feidh Cuilinn."

Taking advantage of the great loss suffered by the King in the above battle, Donal son of Murrough. of the race of Conal Crimthain, attacked him at Magh Seirigh, near Kells, where he fell with the Chiefs of Orior, of Ui Cremthain and Hy Tuirtre, in 738, when Donal gained the throne. Hugh, who was buried at Clonmacnoise, is reckoned as a poet, and according to the *Four Masters* this was the last quatrain composed by him:

"If my beloved God would look upon me on the brink of Loch Sailechedan
Afterwards if I should be found at guilt it would be wealth to a servant to save me."

Hugh was succeeded as Prince of Aileach by his half-brother Nial II., surnamed Frossach, or the Showery, and also Nial Condail, who from his youth was of a remarkably pious disposition. As an instance of this M'Firbis, in the *Fragments of Annals*, tells the following story under date 720:

"About this time Fergal gave out a prediction to his sons, namely Hugh Allan and Nial Condail, and the cause of his doing so originated thus:

"On a certain day they came to him to Ailech Frigrinn, namely Hugh Allan, who was a cunning, fierce lively young hero, and he came to Ailech surrounded by numerous well-armed troops; but the younger son (Nial Condail) came silently, modestly, and peacefully, with a few attendants and he said to humble himself and honour his father: 'It is fitter for me to go to lodge out than to remain thy guest to-night.' 'What induces thee to say this, my son,' said the father, 'while my elder son who has thrice thy number of attendants is staying at Ailech to-night. Why hast thou not the same confidence to remain at Ailech that he has in remaining with his people.' 'I should like' replied Nial, 'that he should do the very same towards thee.' 'Thou shalt not depart hence to-night, O Son' said Fergal, 'but thou shalt remain with thy father and thy mother.'

"After this the elder son Hugh was brought into the great regal house, with his people; but the

younger son, Nial, was conveyed into a beautiful private apartment. They were afterwards served with food and drink; and the father wished to test them both; and he came towards the end of the night to the house where the eldest son was and he remained to listen to what was going on inside that house. They were indeed very dirty in that house. There were jesters and lampooners and horse-boys and clowns and buffoons, roaring and vociferating there—some eating, some drinking, some vomiting, some sleeping, and some piping and whistling; tympanists and harpers playing, some disputing, some quarrelling. Fergal heard them getting on so; and he afterwards came to the private house in which the younger son was lodged, and he remained listening to what was going on in that house; but he heard nothing there but thanksgiving to God for all that they had received, and gentle melodious harp-playing; and songs of praise to the Lord being sung; and the King perceived that the fear and love of God were in that house.

"After this the King returned to his own bed and he meditated deeply in his mind the condition of these two houses.

"Early in the morning he came into the great house in which the elder son was, and it was with difficulty he could remain in the house in consequence of the vomit, filth and stench and the

number, and the hounds that were eating the vomits. And all the persons in the house were snoring, or sleeping as if they were dead, except the King's son alone; but he was sleeping in his own royal bed in such a posture as if he were leading a battalion—a large shield by his left side, and two great darts on his right, a long polished golden-hilted sword on his thigh; and he inspiring and respiring as if another man were putting him to his strength and dexterity.

"He (the King) was not able to remain in the house in consequence of the great corruption of the air within it. And he came on to the house in which the younger son was, and though he came stealthily the younger son perceived him, for he was not asleep but praying to the Lord. He rose up at once to meet his father, from the royal couch on which he was, for he was dressed in a satin tunic, with borders of gold and silver; and he opened the house for his father. And when the father went to the house he folded his arms round the neck of his son and kissed him; and they came together and sat upon the royal couch; and the son first began the conversation with the father and said: 'Father, methinks thou hast passed the last night pensively and sleeplessly and thou oughtest now to sleep in this bed, till the rise of dawn' The father did so and as the day appeared, both arose up together, and the son said to the father: 'Dear father' said he,

'thou oughtest to entertain us in reason, for we have still remaining half what thou hast given us last night, in food and drink' And he had not finished these words when servants brought him a second great vessel full of meat and various viands, after which they feasted together silently and calmly.

"When all had arisen the King came forth into his own house and told, in the presence of all, how the houses of his two sons were; and he said that the elder son would assume the sovereignty over Erin and that he would be vigorous, firm, brave and self-willed and severe during his reign. Also that the younger son would assume the sovereignty and that he would be pious and pure-minded, and that his descendants would be illustrious and royal, and that they would assume the sovereignty alternately And this was verily fulfilled so far.

"Now the daughter of Congal, son of Fergus of Fanaid (King of Ireland) was the mother of the elder son; and it was secretly she brought forth that son, *i.e.*, Hugh Allan, and this is the reason why Fergal had this girl secretly: her father Congal had devoted her to God, and she was in a nunnery and the father had given much gold and silver and cattle to her for preserving her virginity. But however, the general enemy of the human race, namely, the devil, deceived her. She fell in love with Fergal and Fergal loved her and they co-habited

together. Fergal at this time was a royal heir apparent of Erin; and Congal was King of Erin. The man who was the messenger between them told this to Congal and Congal was much grieved at the news of the seduction of his daughter; and he said that the bearer of the story should not live unless he verified it to him.

"The bearer of the story was waiting until Fergal and the daughter of Congal should be in one place; and then he came to Congal and told him of their being in one place. Congal came forward to the house in which they were; and as the daughter of Congal perceived him and his people approaching the house —for she was cunning, sharp and peevish, as was her father—she secreted Fergal under a couch and afterwards sat upon it herself. While Fergal was in this position, a large cat which was in the house came to him and biting at his legs devoured large pieces of flesh off his legs till he put down his hand and taking her by the neck choked her.

"Congal searched the house all around but did not see Fergal in it. He came forth to where the bearer of the story was and drowned him in a river. He afterwards came to his daughter and asked forgiveness of her because she was as he supposed a virgin! that the crime against her might not be upon him. By this secret connection Hugh Allan was begotten. . . . . Now (Athiochta) the daughter of (Cean O'Conor) (*c*) the King of Cian-

nachta (of Glengiven) was the mother of Nial Condail and she was the fairest and the mildest woman that was in Erin in her time . . . . and she was Queen of Erin with Fergal."

Nial was only 22 or 23 years of age when he succeeded Hugh. Under his mild sway the Cinel Eogan enjoyed a long period of peace.

In 759 he assumed the sovereignty on the death of Donal son of Murrough, when "for love of him" there fell from heaven three preternatural showers, near Ailech, namely, a shower of pure silver, a shower of wheat and a shower of honey, hence his surname Nial Frossagh or the Showery.

In the *Annals of Clonmacnoise* this event is thus recorded: "Neale Frossagh, son of K. fferal, began his raign after the Death of K. Donell, and raigned seven years. There was Great famine throughout all the Kingdom in the beginning of his raigne. In so much that the K. himself had very little to live upon; and being then accompanied with seven goodly Bushops, fell upon his knees very pitiful before them all and besought God of his Infinite Grace and Mercy, if his wrath otherwise Could not be appeased, Before he saw the destruction of so many thousands of his subjects and friends that then were helpless of relief and Ready to Perrish to take him to himself, otherwise to send him and them some Relief for maintenance of his service, which request was no sooner made than a Great

shower of silver fell from heaven. Whereat the K. greatly Rejoyced, and yet, said he, this is not the thing that can deliver us from this famine and eminent danger. With that he fell to his prayers again. Then a second shower of heavenly honey fell; and then the K. said, with Great thanksgiving, as before, and with that ye third shower fell of pure wheat which covered all the fields over, the like of which was never seen before, soe that there was such plenty and abundance of wheat, that it seemed able to maintain many kingdoms. Then the K. and the several Bushops gave great thanks to the Lord" :

"The three showers of Ard Uilinne
From heaven for love of Nial fell:
A shower of silver (*d*) a shower of wheat,
And a shower of honey.

Fergal's son was manly;
With heroes was his calling;
Since he found all to follow him—
Nial Frossach his name.

A hundred pledges from each Province
The hero Nial exacted.
Brave was the noble, who boasted
That he had thrice exacted them." [1]

After a short reign of seven years, during which time the country was devastated by earthquakes as well as famines, Nial resigned the crown to Donogh,

[1] *Annals of Ulster.*

son of his predecessor Donal, and retired to Columba's monastery in Iona, where he died in 773, according to the *Four Masters*, which in 794 records the death of his Queen, Dunflaith, daughter of Flaherty, son of Loingseach, Chief of Tyrconnell and High King, by whom, according to Keating, he was father of Hugh Ordnee, or the Dignified.

Nial was interred in the tomb of the Kings of Ireland which, in the beginning of the seventeenth century, was still to be seen with two other great mausoleums in the cemetery which surrounds the Chapel of St. Orans. They bore the following inscriptions :

TUMULUS REGUM SCOTIÆ
TUMULUS REGUM HIBERNIÆ
TUMULUS REGUM NORWEGIÆ

There was also the tomb of a King of France whose name is not given, but who must have abdicated before his death.

Nothing is now shown of these mausoleums except the site. A tradition, more or less authentic, decides that eight Norwegian kings ; four Kings of Ireland ; and forty-eight Scottish kings were interred in the cemetery.

From the reign of Fergús, until that of Macbeth, Iona was the ordinary burying place of the Kings of the Scottish race, and even of some Saxon Princes, such as Egfrid, King of Northumbria who died in 685.

Shakespeare, with his customary fidelity to national tradition, has not failed to send the body of Macbeth's victim to be buried in Iona.

The burial place of the Kings of Scotland was not transferred to the Abbey of Dumferline until the time of Malcolm Canmore, the conqueror and successor of Macbeth and the husband of St. Margaret, who is credited with the erection of the chapel called St. Orans.

Nial, who was succeeded in Aileach by his nephew Malduin, son of Hugh Allan, had a brother Murchad or Murrough (ob. 736); and another, Conor (?) ancestor of Ua Cathain or O'Cahan and his co-relatives, O'Henry of Clan Henry in the valley of Glenconkene in Londonderry; Mac Aneny; M'Closky, etc.

The O'Cahans settled in Ceannacht, or Keenaght, and assumed the Chieftainship of that tribe, afterwards getting possession of that part of Cinel Eoghan (now in Londonderry) extending from Lough Foyle to the river Bann, and including the Baronies of Keenaght, Tirkeeran and Coleraine.

They had their burying place in the Priory of Dungiven, which they founded early in the 12th century, and where many of their monuments, decorated with their escutcheons, are still to be seen. One in particular is much admired —an altar tomb situated on the south side of the chancel. This is said to mark the grave of

Cooey na Gall (son of Manus sl. 1260) a celebrated Chieftain :

" —Who in the storied days
Of Erin's chiefs and clansmen brave
Of bard and martial lays
Was guardian of each field and wood
From Banna's shore to distant Foyle
And warned afar the hireling brood
From Derry's sacred soil.[1]

Cooey is represented in armour in the usual recumbent position, with his hand resting on his sword. On the front of the tomb are the figures of six warriors carved in relief. Until the middle of the last century there was a small freestone slab, in the form of a shield, over the tomb, on which his armorial ensigns were carved.

An interesting account of the O'Cahans, who eventually became the Chief Sept of the Cinel Eoghan, next to the O'Neills, is given in the *Ulster Arch. Jrnl.* (old series). The first mention of the name occurs in the twelfth century.

Malduin, Nial the Showery's nephew, who was now at the head of the Cinel Eoghan, some time after he succeeded gained the Chieftainship of all Ulster, or the North, which he held without question till 780, when he was disturbed by a revolt of the Cinel Conal, under Donal, son of Hugh, son of Flaherty,

[1] " Dungiven Abbey " in the *Dublin Penny Journal.*

son of Loingseach, whom he routed in 781 and again in 782 at Ircoir or Urkin, County Antrim.

Malduin died in the following year, and was buried at Clonmacnoise as appears from a poem in Petrie's *Christian Inscriptions*. Malduin appears to have been the first to gain the Chieftainship of the whole north of Ireland or the "Fochla" as it is sometimes called at this period—Ulaid, or Ulster being applied to the territory of the ancient Ultonians, now Counties Antrim and Down. Curiously enough one of the kings of this territory is reckoned as of the Cinel Eoghan tribe in a poem mentioned by O'Curry (*Manners, etc.*) which describes the battles and deeds of valour of the race of Eoghan "from the battle of Slieve Cua gained over the men of Munster in 593 by Fiachna, son of Baetan, King of Ulster" to 866. This Fiachna is set down in the Annals as the son of Baetan son of Cairel, son of Muredach Red Neck (Muindearg) ancestor of M'Dunlevy, whose territory of Ulidia (Antrim and Down) was conquered by the English under De Courcy.

NOTES.

(*a*) The Fera or men of Ros inhabited the district around the town of Carrickmacross.

(*b*) Flaherty's father, Loingseach, was the son of Ængus, son of Donal, son of Hugh, son of Anmire, whose brother Fergus (son of Sedna) was the ancestor of the O'Donnells, O'Dohertys, etc. See O'Hart.

(*c*) The following is the pedigree of the O'Conors, from the Saltair na Rann, brought down to Conor, from whom they evidently took their surname:

1. Tiege (son of Cian *a quo* Ciannachta, son of Olioll Olum). 2. Condla. 3. Imchad. 4. Fiac. 5. Findchan first settled in Keenaght. 6. Etchon. 7. Erc. 8. Cormac. 9. Crochan. 10. Ernan. 11. Failbhe. 12. Sweeny. 13. Cenfalad burned to death in Dun Cethren by Malduin. 14. Tiege of Tara. 15. Conor, grandfather of Cean, mentioned above. 16. Malfathartach. 17. Congallah. 18. Donchuan, ob. 881. 19. Conor. 20. Dermod. 21. Gallach. 22. Donogh. 23. Conor *a quo* O'Conor. There are manifestly a few generations missing here and there in this pedigree. Dr. O'Conor in his *Dissertations on the History of Ireland* says that George O'Conor, Esq., of Ardlonan near Kells, was, when he wrote, about the year 1780, the chief representative of the O'Conors of Glengiven.

(*d*) In the *Book of Leinster* it is stated that "the shrines and precious things of the Saints of Ireland" were covered with the silver which fell. M'Curtin, writing about the year 1740, says that in his time some of the coin made of the celestial silver was still preserved.

CHAPTER VII.

HUGH THE DIGNIFIED.—NIALL OF THE CALLAIN.—AND HUGH THE HOARY, KINGS OF IRELAND.

AOLDUIN was succeeded in Aileach by his cousin Hugh, surnamed Ordnigh, or the Dignified[1]—son of Nial the Showery—and in the Sovereignty of Ulster by Donal, son of Hugh Red-neck, Chief of Cinel Conal.

Hugh succeeded Donogh son of Donal in the High Kingship in 793 though opposed by his (Donogh's) nephews Finsneachta and Dermod—supported by the Lagenians—whom he vanquished at Drumree near Rathoath, County Meath[2]; and so it was said:

"Though Hugh (Allan) was slain by Donal—a fierce triumph—
By the true fair Hugh in the battle of Drumree it was avenged."

A month later he marched against the Leinstermen to demand submission and hostages, accompanied by Conmhach, Archbishop of Armagh, with the clergy

[1] Stokes: *Calendar of Ængus.* [2] *Four Masters.*

of Leh Conn, apparently to make a more imposing show like the English Deputies in the reign of Elizabeth, though indeed under Charlemagne on the Continent the clergy fought in the ranks.(*a*). However, at Dun Cuair, now Rathcore, County Meath, where he encamped, the Archbishop expostulated with him on the impropriety of bringing the clergy with him on such expeditions. Hugh referred the matter to his chief bard Fothad na Canoin, who after consultation with St. Aengus the Culdee, who then happened to be in the neighbourhood, gave his decision in the form of a short poem exempting the clergy for ever from attending expeditions and hostings :

"The Church of the living God
Let her alone, waste her not
Let her right be apart
As best it ever was,
Every true monk who is
Of a pure conscience,
For the Church to which it is due
Let him labour like every servant.
Every subject from that out
Who is without religious rule or obedience
Is permitted to aid
The great Aedh, son of Nial.
This is the true rule,
Neither more nor less
Let everyone serve in his vocation
Without murmur or complaint."

This decision obtained the name of a Canon, and its author has since been known in history as Fothad na Canoin, or Fothad of the Canon.[1] Aengus, himself the author of many works, highly approved of Fothad's poem and recommended it to the perusal and pious recital of the faithful.

Fothad was a monk of Fahan Mura, one of the chief schools of Ulster, and formerly Hugh's tutor. On his accession he made him his chief poet and counsellor, when he composed his inaugural poem of instructions.

It was the recognized practice of the Irish Kings and Princes to promote to positions of honour and trust those who had been their tutors in early life; and this veneration for poets and other learned men remained unaffected by wars and troubles down to a late period, as we shall see.

In 803 Hugh divided Meath between the two sons of Donogh, namely Conor and Ailill. East Meath he gave to one and West Meath to the other. He likewise, after the death of Finsneachta, King of Leinster—from whom he had received submission and pledges — divided that province between Muredach son of Rory; and Muredach son of Bran.

In 804 he chastised the Ulidians for profaning the Shrine of St. Patrick; and in 814 punished the Cinel Conal who had slain his brother Colman.

About this time the Norsemen who played so

[1] *Idem;* O'Curry's *Lectures.*

important a part in the history of North Western Europe began to ravage Ireland. Though usually called Danes they consisted of two distinct nations —the Fin Ghall or Fair Strangers from Scandinavia, and the Dubh Ghall, or Black Strangers from Denmark proper. These came originally from the forests of Germany but being worsted in battle by Charlemagne, they removed to that country now called Denmark.

Piracy with the Danes, Olaus Wormius, a Norse writer, tells us, was accounted honourable and lawful; "and their kings and children, with the most valiant and notorious they could find, addicted themselves to that sort of life."

Sailing up the large rivers they landed generally in the neighbourhood of some rich church or monastery, which they pillaged and burned, with the surrounding country, before a force could be brought against them. Sometimes when they penetrated far inland they were cut off almost to a man by the chiefs; but still they came; and in the next reign when they began to settle in the country became formidable. In 845 they landed in France and advanced as far as Paris, afterwards desolating Picardy, Flanders and Friesland, and besieging Hamburgh. In 911 they possessed themselves of that part of France included in Normandy, under Rollo the Ganger, ancestor of the Conqueror.

In 812, according to the Irish Annalists, they were

overthrown with great slaughter, near Killarney when, as Eginhard the Secretary of Charlemagne in his well known book of Annals records "they basely took to flight and returned home." This he notices in the same year as the Irish: "The fleet of the Northmen having invaded Hibernia, the island of the Scots, after a battle had been fought with the Scots, and after no small number of the Norsemen had been slain they basely took to flight and returned home."

Hugh who does not appear to have come in contact with any of these foreigners personally—which is not surprising considering their tactics at this time—formed like his predecessor Donogh an alliance of some kind with Charlemagne, as is obvious from a passage in the life of that monarch, written by his friend Eginhard who, referring to instances of his extended fame says: "So devoted to his will had he rendered the Kings of the Scots by his munificence that they never addressed him other than as their lord; and declared themselves his faithful subjects and vassals." He adds that there were letters extant addressed by these Kings —Hugh and Donogh—to the Emperor in which their submission and allegiance were in express terms announced.

There is yet another proof—if proof were wanting —of this alliance, which is certainly curious. We know that the historians of the Norman Conquest

have found materials for their task in the Bayeux tapestry; and in like manner a confirmation of the account of the league between Charles and the Irish monarchs has been sought for in an ancient piece of tapestry at Versailles, where the King of Ireland is represented as standing in a row of princes all in amity with the Emperor, and is drawn as a mark of distinction with an Irish harp by his side.[1]

The Scotch attribute this league to their King, Eochy IV., grandfather of Kenneth M'Alpin; and the double tressure in the Scottish arms is supposed to have originated in the event.(*b*) But as Pinkerton, a Scotch critic, in his *Inquiry into the History of Scotland*, says: "it is certain that it is the Irish alone that are the Scots of Eginhart. . . That emperor procured learned men from Ireland, but probably did not even know of the existence of the Dalreuidni (Dalriadans) or British Scots."

It must be remembered that Ireland was a power in those days as the principal centre of knowledge and piety in Europe.

Among the Irish who distinguished themselves abroad and made their country famous for its schools and scholars during this and the last century, are reckoned, St. Fergal or Vergilius, the Apostle of Carinthia and Bishop of Salzburg, invited to France by King Pepin; St. Rumold, the illustrious Apostle of Mechlin, who appears to have

[1] Moore's *History of Ireland.*

been of the Hy Nial race and according to the *Lateran Breviary* and the *Chronicles of the Church of Mechlin*, "of the royal house of Ireland, and by right of succession heir to a throne"; St. Albuin of Witta, apostle of Thuringia; St. Alto of Bavaria; St. Donatus, Bishop of Fiesole in Tuscany, who reverts so touchingly in his prologue to a *Life of St. Bridget* to the home of his childhood (*c*); Dungal, the opponent of Claudian the Iconoclast, and the favourite of Charlemagne; John Scotus Erigena, who was summoned to France from Ireland by Charles the Bald, with whom by his genius, wit and learning he became a great favourite.

So great was the number of learned men that repaired in those times to France alone that Heric of Auxerre the pupil of Helias the Irish Bishop of Angouleme (ob. 876) in his letter to the French King, Charles the Bald, says:—"Why do I speak of Ireland, that whole nation almost despising the dangers of the sea repair to our coasts with a numerous train of philosophers and holy men, the most famous of whom, bidding adieu to their native land, account themselves happy under your favour, as the servants of the wise Solomon."

Some idea of the state of learning in France and on the Continent at this time may be gathered from the statement of Eginhard, that though the Emperor was a fairly good classical scholar he could never learn to write. He tried anxiously but with

little success, although he used to carry writing materials about with him, and endeavour to trace the written characters even in bed. The description he gives of his dress is not unlike that of the Irish kings—a linen shirt and breeches, and above them a tunic bordered with a fringe of silk. His legs were bandaged with strips of cloth and he wore low leather buskins. In winter he defended his chest with a jacket of otter and marten skins, over these he had a blue cloak and always wore a sword the hilt and belt of which was of gold and silver. On State occasions he wore a robe woven with gold, and buskins ornamented with jewels, with a gold clasp for his cloak and on his head a diadem of gold and gems.

In the description of the dress of King Cormac M'Art in the *Book of Ballymote* (see Chapter I.) which better applies to the Irish kings of this time it is stated that he wore on State occasions a wide flowing purple cloak, fastened with a gem-set gold brooch; a white-collared shirt embroidered with gold—this, called a *leann*, descended to the knees like a kilt and was bound with a *crios* or girdle with golden buckles, and studded with precious stones. On his feet two golden net-work sandals, with golden buckles; and around his neck a gold torque. In his hand two spears with golden sockets. Diadems were only worn in battle. The nether garments worn at this time were apparently not unlike those

of the Highlanders of the present day which leave the knee bare, as we have Nial Black Knee ; Murchad Eagle Knee ; Gluniaran or Iron Knee, etc. After the 12th century the trewse or trousers, attached to the sandals and tightened at the ankles, were chiefly worn.

King Hugh, who died at Ath-da-fearta in Magh Connali in County Louth, "after the victory of penance" [1] in the twenty-fifth year of his reign, and who was succeeded by Conor son of Donogh, married Maeve, daughter of Inreachtach, King of Connaught, son of Muredach Flathead, (*d*) ancestor of the O'Conors, by whom he left a son Nial Calle, who was elected Prince of Aileach and Ulster in 821.

Hugh is the hero of a tale entitled the "Story of Hugh Ordnee and the enchanted goblets," a copy of which, O'Curry (*Lectures*) tells us is contained in the *Liber Flavus Ferguson*, a vellum MS. compiled early in the 15th century.

His friend and counsellor Fothad, as appears from a list of Abbots in the *Ulster Journal*, died a few months after himself in Fahan Mura, the site of which, about five miles N. W. of Aileach, is now occupied by the ruins of a 16th century church. In the old graveyard adjoining, is still to be seen the table cross of Fahan, which is said to mark the grave of St. Mura and his successors. The history of this

[1] *Four Masters.*

Abbey, by the author of *Inishowen and Tirconnell*, is given in the *Proceedings of the R.I.A.*, 2nd Series, Vol. 2, December 1881.

Nial, son of Hugh, assumed the Chieftainship after the deposition of Murrough, son of Malduin, in 821.

This Murrough, grandson of Hugh Allan, marched against the Ard Ri in 820 with the men of the North. His territory he wasted for some reason in 819. At Drum Fergusa, the men of Bregia and the race of Hugh Slaine gave him hostages; and at Ardbraccan, County Meath, he encountered Conor, with the rest of the Hy Nials of the South and the Leinstermen; but "through the miracle of God they were separated without a battle."

This by no means met with the approval of his clansmen who in the following year deposed him and gave the Chieftainship to Nial Calle, the heir apparent to Conor and his brother-in-law.

In 826 Nial became involved in a dispute with Cumasach, son of Cathal, Prince of the Arghialla, one of his tributary chiefs, respecting the succession to the See of Armagh.[1]

His (Nial's) confessor, Eoghan, in that year was unanimously elected Archbishop on the death of Flangus, whose assistant Artry, thereupon backed by the Prince of Arghialla, seized on the See (*e*) and had Eoghan removed.

[1] *Idem.*

Eoghan then sent a complaint in verse to Nial by his psalm singer:

"Tell the illustrious Niall
The warning of Eoghan, son of Amchad
That he will not be in the power in which he was
Unless his Confessor is Abbot of Armagh."

On receiving this missive Nial despatched a force against Cumasach, who held his ground for two whole days till Nial came against him at Lethi Lun in Tyrone, where he was defeated and pursued to Craebh Calle, now Kilcreevy, County Antrim. After this Eoghan was left in possession of his See till his death in 833.[1]

In 832 Nial succeeded Conor, in the last year of whose reign, or the first of Nial's, Turgesius, brother or son of the King of Denmark, landed in Ireland with a great fleet, one division of which entered Lough Foyle and landed troops; another sailed up the Shannon and entered Lough Ree; and a third was stationed at Dundalk. Nial at once marched against the first body of troops whom he encountered at Derry, in Cinel Eoghan, and utterly routed with great slaughter.[2] In 834 they were again overthrown at Carn Fearadaigh, near Limerick; and soon after at Eas Ruadh, now Ballyshannon in Donegal.[3]

[1] Brenan's *Ecclesiastical History.* [2] *Four Masters.*
[3] *Annals of Clonmacnoise.*

Reinforcements, however, were constantly arriving, and no sooner were they driven from one province than they reappeared in another, plundering right and left.

The frequency of these incursions gave rise to the creation of the round towers which began to be built early in this century. To them the inmates of the monasteries retired with their valuables—as books, shrines, croziers, etc.—in case of sudden attack. Occasionally they were used as watch towers (see Petrie's *Essay on the Round Towers.*)

They were admirably suited for the purpose of affording refuge from the murderous raids of the Norsemen; for the monks could retire with their valuables, on a few minutes' warning with a good supply of large stones to drop on the robbers from the windows. Once they had drawn up the outside ladder and barred the door, the tower for a short attack was impregnable.

One of these stood beside St. Columba's monastery in Derry, commanding a view of Loch Foyle. Sampson in his *Memoir of the Chart and Survey of Londonderry* gives a plate of this, which is now no more. It was erected on an excavated mound, vaulted and built with stone; and was apparently the lowest of all the round towers, being only 35 feet high.

Nial's successes contributed materially to break the power of the Danes, who, however, found a

friend and ally in Felimy, the ruler of Munster, who availed of their presence to contest the sovereignty with Nial.

This selfishly ambitious prince, from 826 till his death, never scrupled, in furtherance of his designs, to plunder and spoil the most sacred places, zealously pursuing the same sacrilegious course as the Norsemen, against whom he never once turned his hand.

Nial, however, proved too strong for Felimy, who at a "great royal meeting" at Cloncurry, Co. Kildare, signed a treaty in 838 which he broke the following year; and invading Meath, encamped at Tara.

Nial marched from the North, and Felimy, who had gone to plunder Wexford, turned and met him at Magh Ochtair in Kildare, where he was signally defeated, as it was said:

> "The crozier of the vigil-keeping Fedlimidh
> Which was left on the thorn bushes
> Nial bore off with his usual power
> By right of the battle of swords." [1]

Felimy, who is thought from this to have been some sort of an ecclesiastic as well as king, gave Nial little further trouble during the rest of his reign, so that he was now free to give his attention to the Danes, who had by this established themselves all over the kingdom. In 842 he gave them battle at Moynith

[1] *Four Masters.*

(? Maynooth) and put them to the rout with great slaughter.[1]

Three years later another army of Danes, under Turgesius, landed in Meath and invading Ulster made Armagh their capital. In Cinel Eoghan they were encountered by Nial and vanquished in a pitched battle at Magh Itha. near Ballyshannon, whence he advanced on Armagh. The Danes, confident of victory, met his troops in their advance and the hostile armies closed spear to spear. Nial's men, flushed with victory, carried all before them, when the Danes in the universal rout were slaughtered without mercy. The survivors fled towards the river Callain, probably to gain a temporary refuge in the Navan fort and in the long series of raths which in that quarter crossed the country. The Irish pursued the fugitive enemy and the work of havoc was continued until darkness had set in.

A torrent of rain having fallen in the meantime, and a sudden flood having descended from the mountain lakes near Keady, which are the sources of the Callain, the swollen river burst its usual bounds, and interrupted the march of the victors in their progress towards Armagh.

At the foot of Nillachmore hill, which the river divides from Umgola, Nial halted his troops and commanded one of his body guard to ford the river on horseback, but he was instantly hurried from his

[1] *Annals of Clonmacnoise.*

steed by the impetuosity of the waters; and Nial who saw him struggling for his life in vain commanded his body guard to make every effort to save him. Nial then dashed forward resolved to save his life or perish, but as he approached the brink of the river the ground, undermined by the torrent, sank beneath his horse's feet and he was precipitated into the flood, where death closed his career of victory in the 55th year of his age and 13th of his reign.

His body was deposited with all due respect in a grave dug at Tullachmore on the banks of the river where he had prematurely perished. Stuart, in his *History of Armagh*, says that a simple mound of earth which tradition has from generation to generation denominated "Nial's mound" marked the spot up to about the year 1800, but the tumulus, which was 44 yards in diameter, is now no more. In commemoration of Niall's death was written the lines:

"O curse on thee O severe Callain, thou stream like mist from a mountain
Thou hast painted death on every side of the warlike brunette face of Niall."

And again

"I love not the sorrowful water which flows by the side of Mara
O Callain who shall boast of it? Thou hast drowned the son of an illustrious woman."

Maenghal the pilgrim, Abbot of Bangor, who died in 869, composed these lines :

" Take with thee the total destruction of Nial, who was not a judge without judgment.
To the King of heaven let him make submission, that he may make smooth for him every difficulty.
Nial was drowned, Nial was good,
Nial in the sea, Nial in fire, Nial without death."[1]

That is " Nial was drowned, but his character for goodness is so high, that whether his death be caused by fire, or water, his fame is deathless and his glory immortal."

From the Callan, which a writer in the *Royal Archæological Journal* wrongly takes to be the Callan in County Kilkenny, Nial got his surname of Nial Calle or Nial of the Callan.

Nial was succeeded by his kinsman Malachy, son of Malruanaidh, or Malroney, Prince of Meath, grandson of Donal.

By his Queen, Gormly, daughter of Donogh, son of Donal, who died, according to the *Four Masters*, in 859 " after doing good penance for her transgressions and sins," he was father of Hugh, surnamed Finnlaith, *i.e.*, the Milk-white or Hoary, Tanist to Malachy, who shortly before Nial's death took prisoner Turgesius and drowned him in Lough Owel. About the same time died his friend and ally Felimy

[1] *Annals of Ulster; Four Masters.*

who, as he was devastating the lands of the Abbey of St. Kieran's at Clonmacnoise, received a wound in the stomach from the staff of the Abbot with a curse from the holy man's lips, from the effects of which he never recovered.

The deaths of these princes and the victories of Nial and Malachy for a time completely broke the power of the Danes, nearly 4,000 of whom, according to the *Annals of Ulster*, were put to the sword in 845-7.

On this occasion, as appears from Usher's *Ind. Chron.* Malachy despatched ambassadors to the Court of France with costly presents for the monarch, Charles the Bald, grandson of Charlemagne, telling him of his successes and announcing his intention of going on a pilgrimage to the holy city as an act of thanksgiving; and asking permission to pass through France on his way.

The intended visit they came to announce was frustrated apparently by a disagreement with his Tanist Hugh, with whom he does not appear to have pulled well.

In 854 Hugh gave an overthrow to the Gall Gaedhal, *i.e.*, Foreign Gaels, or Dano-Irish in Glen Foichle, now Glenelly, near Strabane in Tyrone, where a great slaughter was made by him.

In 859 a war broke out between him and Malachy, who marched into Ulster and encamped at Magh Dumha, now Moy, near Charlemont in Tyrone.

That night Hugh, with the Ultonians, and his nephew—Flan, son of Conaing, Lord of Breagh, his sister's son—attempted a surprise and penetrated into the middle of the camp which, however, was manfully defended by Malachy, who obliged him to retire with the loss of many of his men.

In the following year Hugh in return with Aulaf King of the Danes, ravaged Meath and slew Ruarc, son of Bran, King of Leinster, Malachy's ally.

Hugh succeeded Malachy in 861, when he marched against the Ulidians and Connacians, from whom he exacted hostages and pledges.

In 864 he proceeded against the Danes, whose fortresses he plundered from the borders of Cinel Eoghan to the coast of Antrim, carrying off their cattle and accoutrements, their goods and chattels. Learning that they had assembled at Loch Febhail, now Lough Foyle, he advanced towards them and a battle was fought fiercely and spiritedly between them. At length Hugh prevailed, when twelve score of their heads were counted before him.

In 865 Hugh's uncle, Malduin, son of Hugh Ordnee, King of Aileach, died after lengthened suffering and after having entered into religion.

In 866 his nephew, Flan M'Conaing, Lord of Breagh, threw off his allegiance and with a force of 5,000 men, including Leinstermen and Danes, marched against him. Hugh had only 1,000 men with Tiege More, King of Connaught. At Cill-Ua-n Dairghe,

thought to be Kilaneer, near Drogheda, the battle was "eagerly and earnestly" fought, till Flann's men gave way, and were routed with great slaughter. Of this was said:

"Know ye what did the intelligent son of Nial of Aileach,
The fair Aedh, with great slaughter, southwards at Cill-Ua-nDairghe?
Ten hundred in the grave by direct computation;
In the battle which happened, 5000 were defeated.

Hugh cecinit:

"The troops of Leinster are with him, with the additional men of the rapid Boyne.
What shows the treachery of Flann is the concord of the foreigners by his side."

The *Four Masters* also quote these lines, composed by Flann's mother:

"Happiness! Wo! Good news! bad news, the gaining of a great triumphant battle.
Happy for the king whom it makes joyous, unhappy for the king who was defeated.
Unhappy for the host of Leth Chuinn to have fallen by the sprites of Slaini.
Happy the reign of the great Aedh, and unhappy the loss of Flann."

In the *Fragments of Annals* the following interesting account of this battle is given—under A.D. 868—by M'Firbis: "In this year a great

hosting was made by Aedh Finnlaith, son of Nial, King of Erin, against the King of Ciannachta, *i.e.*, Flann, son of Conaing, his own sister's son, had offered a great insult to the King of Erin. There was not in all Erin, at this time, any one of greater valour or renown than this Flann, and although Aedh was not very thankful to him at this time, he being supreme King of Erin, Flann had offered aid when he required it, *i.e.*, when there was a war between him and Maelseachlain, son of Maelruanaidh, for it was in consequence of this that Maelseachlain had expelled Flann from his territory. When however, Flann, son of Conaing, offered this insult to the King of Erin, then Flanna, daughter of the King of Osraighe, *i.e.*, of Dunlang, the wife of Aedh Finnlaith at this time, she having been previously married to Maelseachlainn, to whom she bore Flann (Sinna) the best man in Erin in his time and who was monarch of Erin afterwards. This same Flanna was also the mother of the famous Cinnedigh, son of Gaithin (Lord of Leix). This queen, I say, was erecting a church to Brigit at Cill-dara (Kildare) and she had many tradesmen in the wood, felling and cutting timber. Now this queen had heard the conversation and talk of the Leinstermen about her husband, *i.e.*, Aedh Finnlaith and her son, *i.e.*, Flann, son of Maelseachlainn, whose fame and renown at this time had never been enjoyed by any one before, and when she had learned that the rising

out of Leinster was going to aid Flann, son of Conaing, King of Ciannachta, she came forward to where her husband was and told it to him and she exhorted him heartily to assemble his forces to give them battle. After this Aedh sent his army throughout Ciannachta, which they plundered and burned, and they made a great havoc of the people. Flann himself, however, did not come to attack them immediately, for there was a large fleet at this time in the mouth of the Boinn (Boyne), and he sent for them, requesting that they would come to his relief —and so they did. And the Leinstermen also came to relieve him. They all set out in pursuit of the King of Erin, who had sent his spoils before him. Aedh ascended a hill which commanded a view of the great hosts which were in pursuit of him. . . and by the advice of his counsellors he said: 'It is not by a force of soldiers that a battle is gained, but by the aid of God and the righteousness of the prince. Pride and superfluous forces are not pleasing to God, but humility of mind and firmness of heart. These people have great hosts and they advance proudly. Assemble ye all around me now and have no intention of flying; for far from you are your own houses; and they are no friends who will follow you. It is not protection or quarter ye shall receive. Do, however, as your fathers and your grandfathers have done. In the name of the Trinity suffer showers (of darts or javelins) to be discharged

at you. When you see me rising, rise you all to attack as God will show unto you.'

"Monday was the day of the week. Now Flann, son of Conaing said to his (men) on the other hand: 'These people are few and we are numerous, harden your steps against them.' He then divided his forces into three divisions, in the first of which he was himself, in the second the Leinstermen, in the last Lochlanns (Danes), and he harangued them all, saying: 'This people will fall by you' said he, 'and ye shall gain victory and triumph over them, for they are too proud to fly before you and ye are more numerous. I am not engaged in this battle with any other view except to gain the throne of Teamhair (Tara) or be killed.' These three divisions were indeed beautiful. Many were the beautiful parti-coloured standards that were there, and shields of every colour.

"They afterwards came in this order to meet the King of Erinn. The King was awaiting them, having six standards and the Cross of the Lord, and the Staff of Jesus. When the enemy's forces came close to Aedh, he placed and arrayed around him, the King of Uladh on the one side and the King of Meath on the other side and he said to them: 'think not of flight, but trust in the Lord, who gives victory to the Christians, let not your minds be effeminate but manly, and suddenly put your enemies to flight in the battle that your fame may

last for ever.' They all replied that they would do so.

"The King of Erin had not finished the delivery of these words when the enemy came near him, and first discharged great showers of darts, and afterwards great showers of javelins and thirdly a shower of half javelins, so that the King and his people rose up against, and fought bravely with them. Alas! I do not find in the old book which is broken, the whole of the proceedings of both parties in this battle of Cill-Ua-n Dighre, nor all the fine words which the King of Erin spoke to direct his own people. However, we find that the enemy were defeated by the King, and then the King said (when the enemy was routed by his people): 'Beloved people,' said he, 'spare the Christians and fight against the idolaters, who are now routed before you.' These words were not spoken by him in vain, for they did this at his bidding, so that not more than one fourth of them escaped scathless.

"The Leinstermen escaped in safety to their own patrimony for they formed themselves into a solid compact phalanx by advice of their prudent leader, *i.e.*, Malciaran, son of Ronan. But Flann, son of Conaing, fled with his forces, and was overtaken by the King's party, and he lost his head, which was taken before the King's Council and the King lamented over it then, and all told him that he ought not to lament merely on account of the nearness of

their relationship and other reasons which I cannot get from the old book."

With Flann fell Carlus, son of Aulaf, King of the Danes, Dermod Lord of Lough Gabhar and others. On Hugh's side fell Fachtna, son of Malduin, heir of Aileach or of the North.

Hugh after this battle proceeded to punish the Lagenians and marching into Leinster ravaged their territory.

In 871 he assaulted and stormed a fortress of the Danes in Orior near Armagh, putting 240 of the garrison to the sword and carrying off their goods and captives.

In 876 his nephew Ualgharg, son of Flaherty, son of Nial, heir apparent of Ulster, died. From him descended Mac Ualgharg or M'Goldrick.

In 878 "Aedh (Finnlaith) son of Nial (Caille), King of Teamair, fell asleep in Drum Innasclain (now Drumenesclan Co. Louth) in the territory of (Magh) Conailli on the 12th of the Kalends of December." Of him his bard said in recording his death:

"On the twelfth of the musical Kalends
Of December, fierce its tempests,
Died the noblest of Princes
Aedh of Ailech, Chief King of the Gaedhal
A sturdy manly man (was he)
Of whom territorial Teamhair was full,
A shield against hidden dangers
Of the stout stock of Milidh's (Milesius's) sons.'

Flanagan, son, of Ceallach Lord of Breagh, a celebrated poet, in lamentation wrote :

"Long is the wintry night,
With rough gusts of wind
Under pressing grief we encounter it
Since the red-speared King of the noble house liveth not.

It is awful to watch
How the waves heave from the bottom ;
To them may be compared
All those who with us lament him.

A generous, wise, staid man
Of whose renown the popular Teamhair was full ;
A shielded oak that sheltered
The palace of Milidh's sons.

Master of the games of the fair-hilled Tailtin ;
King of Teamhair of an hundred conflicts
Chief of Fodhla (Erin)—
The noble Aedh of Ailech—who died too soon.

Popular, not forgotten,
The departure from this world
Stony, not merciful,
Is the heart of the son of him who grieves not

No greater than small flies
Are the Kings of Adam's race with him ;
A yew without any charge, or blemish, upon him,
Was he of the long flowing hair." [1]

[1] *Four Masters ; Annals of Ulster.*

Hugh, by his Queen, Maolmuire, daughter of Kenneth M'Alpin, King of Scotland, was father of the celebrated prince, Nial Glunduff. He also left a daughter married to Aulaf the White, King of the Danes and founder of Dublin, son of Inguald, King of Uplands. (See Haliday's *Scandinavian Kingdom*). She is sometimes made the daughter instead of the granddaughter of Kenneth M'Alpin.

Kenneth was the grandson of Eochy, of the line of Fergus, the Prince of Dal Riada mentioned in the reign of Hugh Ordnee. Eochy is said to have married Ergusia, a daughter of the King of the Picts; and under their grandson Kenneth the Picts and Dal Riadans, or Albanian Scots, were first united A.D. 842 (see Skene's *Celtic Scotland*).

Kenneth in his wars against the Picts seems to have received some aid from Hugh's father Nial, who despatched a force under Godfrey, the son of Fergus Prince of Oriel, one of his tributary chiefs, to his assistance in 835, as appears from the *Four Masters:* "Godfraidh son of Ferghus Chief of Orghialla went to Alba to strengthen the Dal Riada." Godfrey afterwards established himself in Alba as Chief of the Hebrides, probably at the request of Kenneth.

Kenneth's line ended with Alexander III., who died in 1283; and from whose grand uncle, David, Earl of Huntingdon, brother of William the Lion, the subsequent Kings of Scotland traced their descent through his daughters Isabel and Margaret.

Malmuire, Hugh's widow, married secondly Flan Sinna, King of Ireland, and died, according to the Annals, in 912.

From the *Fragments of Annals* it would appear that Hugh was married to the daughter of the Prince of Ossory, but that must be a mistake except she was his first wife and that her death is wrongly placed in the Annals, which is improbable. In 886 her death is thus given in the *Four Masters*: "Flanna, daughter of Dunghal and wife of Maelseachlain, son of Maelruainaidh, King of Ireland, died after a well spent life and was interred in Clonmacnoise."

NOTES.

(*a*) The English prelates and clergy who came to Ireland after the Invasion often appeared at the head of the English forces, as a reference to the Irish Annals and English records shows. In 1406 Marleborough, the English chronicler, records that "the Prior of Conal in the Plaine of Kildare fought valiantly and vanquished 200 of the Irish that were well armed slaying some of them and chasing others." "And thus," he adds, "God assisteth those that put their trust in Him."

In 1504, before the battle of Knocktoe, one of the Ulster princes of that day—Art O'Neill—rebuked the English bishops who appeared at the Council of War and told them that their duty was "to pray, to preach, and to make fair weather, and not to be privy to manslaughter."

(*b*) This, they say, was a grant from Charlemagne, who also established the Scot's Guards. These and other legends, given in the obsolete *Histories of Scotland*, are omitted by modern writers like Andrew Laing and Dr. Burton.

(*c*) This prologue, in Latin verse, was taken by Colgan from a MS. which he procured in Monte Cassino: "For in the West, they tell of a matchless land which goes in ancient books by the name of Scotia; (*i.e.*, Ireland) rich in resources this land, having silver, precious stones, vestments and gold; well suited to earth born creatures as regards its climate, its sun and its arable soil; that Scotia of lovely fields that flows with milk and honey, hath skill in husbandry and raiments and arms and arts and fruits. There are no fierce bears there, nor ever has the land of Scotia brought forth savage beasts; no poison hurts, no serpent creeps through the grass, nor does the babbling frog croak and complain by the lakes. In this land the Scottish race are worthy to dwell, a renowned race of men in war, in peace, in fidelity."—Hyde's *Literary History*.

(*d*) From this Muredach, great grandson of Hugh, son of Eochy Toimcharna, the O'Conors took their tribe-name of Siol Muredach or Murray. Muredach, called King of Durlus by Keating, had: Inreachtach, mentioned above, who had a son Hugh Balbh or the Stammerer, King of Connaught; Cathal, Conor, Conmach and Fothad—*Silva Gadelica*.

(*e*) Artry was evidently a tribesman of the Prince of Arghialla. St. Bernard, in his *Life of St. Malachy*, complains of the Arghiallans, who would not allow any Bishop among them who was not of their tribe. They claimed the See of Armagh and maintained possession of it for 200 years.

CHAPTER VIII.

NIAL GLUNDUFF, KING OF IRELAND *a quo* UA NIAL OR O'NEILL.

OF Flaherty, son of Murchad, son of Malduin, who obtained the Kingship of Ulster after the death of Hugh Finnlaith, there is little recorded.

In 883 his uncle, Aengus, heir, or *roydamna* of Ulster, was slain by the men of Dal Araidhe,[1] in Ulidia.

In 889 some of his men and those of Atteidh, son of Laighne, Prince of Ulidia, created a disturbance at Armagh, about Whitsuntide, which was finally quelled by Maelbrigid, the Archbishop, who had four of the most active ringleaders hanged. On the others he imposed a fine of 630 oxen—about £7000—and exacted hostages for their future good behaviour. [2]

This taking of hostages, to which we have often referred, was the usual method adopted by the kings and princes to secure the allegiance of their sub-chiefs, so that every prince or king had hostages residing in his palace.

The hostages were generally treated with

[1] *Annals of Ulster.* [2] *Four Masters; Annals of Ulster.*

consideration, and admitted to the court society so long as they conducted themselves with propriety. Sometimes, either on account of misconduct, or where there was special reason for unfriendly feeling, they were treated with great harshness, heavily fettered and closely confined.[1]

In every palace there was a special house for lodging hostages. In Tara the hostage-house stood beside the mound called Duma-nan-Gial—the Mound of the Hostages—which still remains. In the *Battle of Magh Rath and Feast of Dun-nan-ged* we are told that Donal, King of Ireland, of the Cinel Conal tribe, built his palace of Dun-nan-ged in imitation of that of Tara, and among other buildings he erected the Carc-air-nan-giall, *i.e.*, the prison-house of the hostages. In Chapter V. we have described the prison-house of Aileach which was bee-hive shaped.

The Crith Gabhlach, given in the Appendix to O'Curry's *Manners and Customs*, in describing the residence of a king, speaks of "a moat or trench of servitude," for hostages, whose length is thirty feet. Expeditions made to secure hostages are are called hostings.

In 891 Donal, son of Hugh Finnlaith, succeeded as King of Ulster on the death of Flaherty, who fell in a skirmish with the men of Clanbrassil—the M'Canns—in the present Co. Armagh.

[1] Joyce's *Soc. Hist.*

Donal held the kingship for some time, until his right was disputed by his brother, Nial Glunduff. It was then agreed to settle the question by a battle, which was prevented by the two being elected to reign jointly. We have no details as to the arrangements adopted, in these cases, to define the authority of each, or the measures taken to avoid friction or quarrels.

Donal resigned in 903, probably influenced by the death of his son and heir, Flan, who died the previous year. In 911 he died, according to the Annalists, after a well spent life.

In lamentation of him and of Aengus, son and heir of Flan Sinna, was said :—

" From the birth of Christ, body of purity, till the death of Donal, according to the Chronicles—
A better guide cannot be found—one year and ten above nine hundred.
The history of this year is heavy mist to fertile Banba.
Ængus of Meath, the great Champion, and Donal, son Hugh of Aileach, perished
There came not of the Irish a youth like Ængus of Codail
In the latter ages there was not a royal hero like Donal of Dabhail (*i.e.* the Blackwater)
Heavy sorrow to the Gaedhal that these chiefs have perished
The first of this spring their times will be found in the histories."

Donal had a son Eochaid, or Eochy, progenitor

of the Fera Droma, *i.e.*, men of Droma (now Drumleen) or O'Donnellys, (*a*) the hereditary marshals to the princes of Ulster. At one time they were seated around the town of Castlecaulfield, anciently Ballydonnelly.

Flan, the eldest son of Donal, is made by some the ancestor of Murta, the last King of Ireland of the Hy Nial race.

Donal was senior to Nial, who, however, was of a bolder and more enterprising disposition ; qualities which counted for everything at this time. In 907 one Cearnaghan M'Dulgan, perpetrated sacrilegious violence in the Cathedral of Armagh, from which he took a certain captive who had fled there for refuge, and drowned him in Lough Cirr near the city.

The Archbishop complained to Nial of this ; for in Ireland as in other Christian countries many of the churches had the right of sanctuary. A small piece of land was usually fenced off round the church ; and the four corners were often marked by crosses or pillar stones.

This and other land adjoining the church was called the *Termon land*, and was in charge of a warden or lay superintendent termed an *Erenagh*. This office was sometimes hereditary; and in many places the Termon lands have preserved the family names of the Erenagh instead of those of the patron saint, as the parish of Termonmaguirk

in the now Co. Tyrone which was anciently Termon Cuimnighe and which name Dr. Reeves (*Life St. Columba*) conjectures may have been derived from Cuimne, sister of St. Columbkille. It got its present name from the family of MacGuirk, who were for a long time its hereditary wardens. In like manner the O'Mongans were the hereditary wardens of Termonomongan in the West of the same county, its ancient name being Kilkerril from St. Kerril or Cairell, the founder, or patron of the church.

The Termon lands were regarded as belonging exclusively to the church; and criminals fleeing from justice or fugitives from their enemies were supposed to be safe from molestation once they had taken refuge either in the church itself or inside that part of the Termon marked off as a sanctuary.

Nial, on learning of the outrage committed by Cearnaghan, had him seized and drowned in the same lake—Cirr—as a punishment for his crime.

In 910 he marched against Flan Sinna, his father-in-law, and encamped at Grellach-Eilte in West-meath—beyond Crossakeel westerly—whence he sent out a party to bring in fuel. But they were surrounded by Flan and his sons and cut down to the number of forty-five, including Fergal, son of Aengus, son of Malduin, Connecan, son of

Muirkertac, and others. Of this, Nial's bard wrote :—

"Sorrow to the cold Grellach Eilte
We find hosts by its side,
Cormacan (the poet) said to Nial:
We will not be able to journey westwards
Let us go eastwards." [1]

Soon after this Nial made peace with Flan, who in the previous year founded the great church or Cathedral of Clonmacnoise, before the great western door of which stands the beautiful memorial cross, fifteen feet high, which still asks a "prayer for Flann, son of Maelseachlain."

This cross, Petrie thinks, was erected for the two-fold purpose of commemorating the foundation of the church and of marking the sepulchre of King Flann, its pious founder. It is a most interesting specimen of Celtic art in sculpture at this early and, as Dr. Healy (*Ancient Schools*) says, unpropitious period.

The sculptures on the west side of the shaft represent St. Ciaran and the luckless King Dermod in the act of planting the first pole enclosing the sacred boundary of Clonmacnoise. The opposite side represents events in the life of our Saviour.

Flann's tribe, called the Clan Colman, or O'Melaghlins, descendants of Colman, brother of

[1] *Annals of Ulster.*

Dermod, had their mortuary chapel here, called Tempull Righ—the King's chapel—and sometimes Tempull Ua Maelseachlain or O'Melaghlin. It stands south-east of the Cathedral, and measures 40 feet in length and 17 in breadth—

"Many and many a son of Conn the Hundred Fighter
In the red earth lies at rest,
Many a blue eye of Clan Colman the turf covers,
Many a swan-white breast."

Flann appears to have been a pious prince. In 916 he covered the *Book of Durrow*, a highly ornamented copy of the Gospels, according to Jerome's version, written by St. Columcille and preserved in the Abbey of Durrow, in the present King's Co. The cover, with its gems and silver cross has disappeared, but according to O'Flaherty, who saw both in Trinity College, where the book now is, it bore an inscription asking for "a prayer for Flan, son of Maelseachlain, King of Ireland, for whom this cover was made." Referring to the MS. and its cover, O'Flaherty, writing towards the close of the 17th century, says: "I have seen handwritings of St. Columba in Irish characters as straight and as fair as any print, of above 1000 years standing, and Irish letters engraved in the time of Flan, King of Ireland."

In 913 Nial, who acted as heir apparent to Flan, invaded West Connaught, and gave an overthrow

to the men of Tir Awley and Ua Mhaill, who lost great numbers.

In the same year he was obliged to march against the Ulidians, who were not inclined to acknowledge his sway. At Glarryford, near the Ravel Water, in Antrim, he defeated Loingseach, Chief of Dal Araidhe, and, marching southwards, encountered and vanquished Hugh, son of Eochagan, Prince of Ulidia, who signed a treaty of peace at Tullahoge in Cinel Eoghan in November.[1]

In 914 Nial suppressed a rising against Flan Sinna by his sons Donogh and Conor, from whom he exacted pledges and hostages.

Soon after this, Flan died peacefully at Kinneigh, a religious house in Kildare, in the 68th year of his age (*b*) when Nial ascended the throne. In the same year he renewed the great Fair of Tailtin, where the laws were promulgated; a military review was held; and a court for the hearing of appeals.

He next prepared to take the field against the Norsemen, who, after a rest of nearly half a century, were again ravaging Ireland. At this time they had a great fleet and fortress at Waterford, from which, under Attar (with the Danes of Brittany) and Raghnall and Sitric, sons of Godfrey, King of Northumberland, they wasted the whole of Munster.

[1] *Annals of Ulster; Four Masters.*

Against these Nial marched at the head of his troops, and encamped at Tobar Glethrach, in the neighbourhood of Clonmel, on the 22nd August, 915. On the same day the Danes under Sitric advanced to meet him, when, after an indecisive engagement both armies separated and retired to their camps. Hearing that reinforcements under Raghnall were on their way from Waterford, Niall went out of his camp with a small force against them and narrowly escaped being cut off.

On the morrow he again advanced against the combined forces, whom he at length succeeded in defeating and driving to their ships after a sanguinary engagement in which 1100 men fell on both sides, but the greater number on the side of the Danes. For three weeks Nial remained encamped against them, and kept them to their ships till they divided, one division under Sitric, sailing to Dublin and up the Liffey to Cenn Fuait, now Confey near Leixlip, Co. Kildare, thus hoping to draw him off. But he having got intelligence of this, sent word to Ugaire, King of Leinster, to besiege Sitric, which he did, till at last Raghnall giving up all hopes of landing, sailed to Scotland where Attar was slain.

Meanwhile Sitric, and Ivar, who had brought reinforcements, had given battle to the Leinstermen, and succeeded in defeating them with the loss of Ugaire, their Archbishop, and 600 men,

after which they plundered Kildare and marched to Dublin, which they made their headquarters.

Next year Nial advanced on Dublin, when, again deceived as to the strength of the Danes, and confident of victory, he uttered these words, according to the *Four Masters*:

"Whoever wishes for a speckled boss, and a sword of sore inflicting wounds
And a green javelin for wounding wretches, let him come early in the morning to Ath Cliath" (*i.e*, Dublin).

The Danes, confiding in their numbers, came forth to meet the Irish, when a bloody battle was fought at Kilmashoge, near Rathfarnham, where Niall suffered a disastrous defeat, being left on the field with Conor O'Melaghlin, his heir apparent; Flaherty, son of Donal, heir of Ulster; Hugh, Prince of Ulidia, Maelmithidh, son of Flanagan, Lord of Breagh; the Lord of Oirghilla, and others. Of this battle was said:

"Fierce and hard was the Wednesday
On which hosts were strewn under the feet of shields:
It shall be called, till Judgment's day,
The destructive morning of Ath Cliath,
On which fell Niall the noble hero;
Conor, chief of fierce valour;
Aedh, son of valiant Eochaidh, of Ulidia;
Maelmithidh of the proud, lofty dignity.

Many a countenance of well known Gaeidhil,
Many a chief of grey-haired heroes,
Of the sons of Kings and Queens,
Were slain at Ath Cliath of swords.
The strength of a brave lord was subdued
Alas that he was deceived in the strength of an army
There would be otherwise no mourning upon the strand." [1]

In lamentation of Nial was written the lines:

" Sorrowful this day is noble Ireland
Without a valiant Chief of hostage reign;
(It is to see the heaven without a sun
To see Magh Neill without Niall).

There is no joy in man's goodness;
There is no peace or gladness among hosts;
No fair can be celebrated,
Since the cause of sorrow died.

(A pity) this, O beloved Magh Breagh
Beautiful desirable country,
Thou hast parted with thy lordly King,
Nial the wounding hero has left thee.

Where is the chief of the western world?
Where is the hero of every clash of arms?
Is it the brave Niall of Cnucha
That has been lost, O great Cantred"? [2]

Niall was shriven on the field by Celedabhaill, son of Scanlan, Abbot of Bangor; and his tomb,

[1] *Four Masters.* [2] *Annals of Ulster.*

made of great transverse and upright unhewn blocks of stone, is still to be seen on the hill overlooking the battlefield in the grounds of Glen Southwell, near St. Columba's College :

A Cairn on a mountain's summit, a many a kernes-mound,
Had thrice its height of tribute stones, and thrice its paces round
Nor ever a branch of Ogham, nor Christian scribe to tell,
The lofty and the generous heart that sleeps in its silent cell.[1]

Niall, as well as Aileach, is said to have had a fortress at Rath More, *i.e.*, the Great Rath, near Trim, the remains of which are still pointed out. By his Queen, Gormly, daughter of Flann Sinna, (and Gormly daughter of Flann, son of Conain), and sister of Donogh, his successor, he left a son, Muirchertach II.[2]

Of Niall's marriage with this lady the followng romantic story is told by the old historians.

She was first betrothed to Cormac Mac Cullenan, King of Munster, but Cormac turned his attention to religion and became a monk, and finally a bishop, though he retained the kingship of Munster Gormly was then from political motives forced to accept Cearbhaill, Prince of Ossory and King of Leinster, who, with her father, on some provocation,

[1] From the Poems of Wm. Rooney. [2] Keating's *History*.

made war on Munster and defeated and killed Cormac, who was beheaded. Cearbhaill was wounded, and Gormly watched over his sick bed. Seated one day at the foot of his couch, she ventured to regret the mutilation of Cormac, when Cearbhaill in a rage, thrusting forth his foot, threw her upon the floor in the presence of her attendants. Because of this outrage she at once left his court and sought refuge with her father, but Flann, instead of revenging the outrage, sent her back to his ally.

Niall, hearing of his cousin's distress, at once prepared to take action, and assembled his clansmen:

"They are yours for life, O Cearbhaill's wife, or yours
for death in the battle's glare
When our blue-sharp swords through Leinster's hordes
Shall cut a pathway for vengeance there

"Shall cleave and kill with a mighty will, shall hack and
hew for your woe or weal,
Till one who is best on his foeman's breast shall press
in triumph the victor's heel.

"So now we march, 'neath the greening arch of woodland
places, swim rivers wide
To guard your name from a coward's blame, to bear
you far from a coward's side." [1]

Niall marched into Leinster and secured her a separation, and a royal maintenance. In 904

[1] Poems of Ethna Carbery.

Cearbhaill died, when, in 905, she married Niall, by whom, as we have said, she had a son Muirchertach of the Leather Cloaks. To him and Cearbhaill the legend given in the *Annals of Clonmacnoise* and mentioned in Chapter IV. refers.

Queen Gormly survived until 963, when she died of a "tedious and grievous wound." inflicted in this manner, according to the *Annals of Clonmacnoise:* "She dreamed that she saw King Niall Glunduff; whereupon she got up and sate in her bed to behold him, when he, for anger, would forsake and leave the chamber, and as he was departing in that angry motion (as she thought) she gave a snatch after him, thinking to have taken him by the mantle, to keep him with her, and fell upon the bedstick of the bed so that it pierced her breast to her very heart, which received no cure until she died thereof. During her last illness Gormly composed several poems of considerable merit, some of which are still preserved.

The following is Dr. Sigerson's version of her lament for Niall, a literal translation of which is given in the *Book of the Dean of Lismore.*

NIALL'S DIRGE.

BY QUEEN GORMLY.

Move, O monk thy foot away,
Lift it now from Niall's side,
Over much thou'st cast the clay,
Where I would with him abide.

Over-long thy task this day,
Strewing clay o'er Niall slain;
Tread no further, friend delay,—
Raise it not to meet the plain.

Ah close not for aught the grave,
Cleric sad with solemn lay;
From o'er Niall bright and brave,
Move, O Monk, thy foot away.

I am Gormly, who, in gloom,
Sing for him the sorrowing lay;
Stand not there upon his tomb,
Move, O Monk, thy foot away.

From Niall his descendants took their surname of Ua Niall, generally written as it is pronounced in English, O'Neill, which name was first assumed by his grandson Donal, son of Muirkertac.

NOTES.

(*a*) See Appendix to *Four Masters* for O'Donovan's pedigree of the O'Donnellys. Also the *Book of Fenagh*, where Fergus, son of Murkertac Mac Erc, is made the progenitor. There appears to have been two families of the name in Tir Eoghan. Drumleen was in Tir Enda, in the Barony of Raphoe, north of Lifford.

(*b*) Flan's first or second wife, Malmorey, widow of Hugh the Hoary, was mother of Ligach, who married Malmithi, Lord of Breagh, and had a son Congallah the last monarch of the race of Hugh Slane and ancestor of the O'Kellys of Bregia and of Lea, in Queen's County.

CHAPTER IX.

MURKERTAC OF THE LEATHER CLOAKS, KING OF ULSTER.

NIAL was succeeded in the sovereignty of Ulster by his nephew Fergal, son of Donal, Murkertac his son not being of age.

Murkertac soon came to the fore, however, and was the real King of Ulster during the seventeen years that his cousin held the title, judging from the records of the two. Murkertac spent nearly his whole life in battling against the Danes, proving himself the most formidable enemy they had yet encountered in Ireland.

In 920 he encountered and cut to pieces a detachment of the Danes of Dublin who under their King, Godfrey, had sacked Armagh.[1] Soon after with a fleet of 32 ships under Ascolb they arrived in Lough Foyle and plundered Inishowen, having surprised Fergal.[2] However, at Snamh Aighneach, or Carlingford Lough, they were routed by

[1] *Annals of Ulster.*

[2] *Four Masters; Annals of Ulster.* All or nearly all the above events relating to Murkertac, taken principally from the Annals, are given by O'Donovan in the *Circuit*, etc.

Murkertac, when 200 of their heads were piled before him.

Some months later he again gave them battle at the bridge of Cluan-na-Cruimther, when they were defeated with the loss of 800 men, as well as Albdan, son of Godfrey; Aufer and Roilt. He then besieged the remainder for a week at Ath Cruithne, or Athcratin, near Newry—where they had taken refuge—till he was obliged to raise the siege on the approach of an army from Dublin under Godfrey.

These successes aroused the jealousy of Fergal, who on some pretext attacked him and his brother Conaing at Magh Uatha (? Itha) where many fell.

Taking advantage of these feuds Matadhan, Prince of Ulidia, threw off his allegiance and with Aulaf, son of Godfrey, and the Danes of Lough Neagh—whose chief, Earl Torolf, son of Gorme, King of Denmark, had been despatched by Murkertac some time before—plundered Ulster as far as Slieve Betha westwards, and as far southwards as Mucnamh, now Mucnoe near Castleblaney, where they were vanquished by Murkertac with the loss of 240 men. At Rubha Conconghall they were again overthrown with the loss of 300 men by Conaing, who died soon after, and was buried with his cousin Conor, brother of Fergal, in Armagh in the cemetery, or mausoleum of the kings.

The former appears to have been outside the

Cathedral; and the latter, in which most of the O'Neill Kings were interred, on the north side of the church, near the high altar, as we learn from Mac Namee's poem on Brian O'Neill, King of the Irish, who was slain by the English in the battle of Down in 1260, as recorded in that year:

"In Ard Macha (Armagh) are the interments
Of Ulaidh (Ulidia) with their limestone graves
Among the tombstones of our Clanna Neill
Alas that his resurrection shall not be there."

Again he says:

"The tomb of the King of Aileach of thick hair
O you people who forget its identity,
I would point out to you the grave
On the north side of the church.

"Brian Borumha in the north of the Church,
Brian O'Neill of red-armed Aileach,
Farther to the west is the descendant of Conn,
And his feet towards Brian Borumha."

Brian Boru was buried in 1015 on the north side of the high altar in a stone coffin.

In 937 Murkertac succeeded to the Kingship of Ulster on the death of Fergal, and was crowned at Tullahoge, by the Archbishop of Armagh. We say crowned, for the Irish kings like those of other countries, as Dr. Joyce shows (*Soc. Hist.*), wore crowns, called Minns, or Minds.

The Minn, which was also worn by the princes and nobles, like the coronets of the modern nobility indicating rank according to the shape and make, was a cap of elaborate workmanship made of a combination of various metals, and so formed as to cover the whole head. Some had rays or fillets standing up all round, like those of the O'Conor, Kings of Connaught, represented in the 13th century fresco painting in Knockmoy Abbey.

The Durrow high cross, erected about the year 1010 has the figure of a crowned Irish king with a shield, sword, and spear, and a dog on each side. Dr. Joyce, who gives a drawing of this, says "the original crown, of which this is a representation, was about five inches high, quite flat on top, with a slender band all round, above and below. The bands are connected by slender little fillets, or bars, about two inches asunder. It covers the whole head like a hat; and there are two bosses over the ears, three or four inches in diameter."

Crowns formed part of the battle-dress of a chief, as we learn from the description of the battle-dress of Conn of the Hundred Battles in Chapter I.; and for this reason they are also called Clanbarrs or Helmets. In the description of King Cormac M'Art in the *Book of Ballymote*, it is stated that at the fairs and great assemblies "each king wore his kingly robe upon him; and his golden helmet

on his head; for they never put their kingly diadems on but in the field of battle only."

Murkertac immediately after his coronation, with his father-in-law, Donogh, son of Flan Sinna, the monarch, marched against the Danes of Dublin, whose territory he ravaged from Dublin to Mullaghmast in Kildare. They then took refuge in the city, before which he remained encamped some time, the neighbouring chiefs voluntarily supplying the necessaries of life; for it appears to have been Murkertac's great boast that what he never got by favour, he never took by force. His kinsman, Congallah, son of Malmithi, Lord of Breagh—part of whose territory appears to have been mistaken for that of the Danes adjoining—was not quite so sure of this, as he reminds him in the lines:

"Muirchertach, above all the men of Fail, has not seized on plunder or prey,
Although he has been burning our corn, and well eating our bread."

Murkertac aptly replies:

"Congal of the fertile Breagh is like unto a mute, or stammering man.
Out of his head no muttering is understood, but what is like the bubbling of boiling meat."

In 937 he was surprised in Aileach by his old enemies, who carried him off to their ships but he

afterwards succeeded in making his escape. Fitting out a fleet, he pursued his captors to their island homes, on the Scottish coast, from which he returned laden with plunder. On this occasion he was accompanied by a grandson or nephew, Aulaf, surnamed from his stateliness, Pa, or the Peacock, of whom the following romantic story is told in the *Laxdale Saga*, a Norse work, quoted in Haliday's *Scandinavian Kingdom of Dublin :*

His father Haskuld was a great grandson of Aulaf the White, who married Murkertac's aunt, daughter of Hugh Finnlaith; and his mother "Melkorka" was "the daughter of Myrkiartan, King of Ireland." She was taken captive when fifteen years of age, by the Danes, from whom she was redeemed by Haskuld, who lived in Iceland, where Aulaf was born. As soon as he had passed the age of Scandinavian manhood, his mother became anxious that he should visit his Irish relations, as she said: "I have brought you up with the greatest care at home; and have taught you Irish to be of use to you wherever you land." At the age of eighteen he accordingly set out on his journey, and sailed to Norway, where he was graciously received by King Harold Graefeld and Queen Gunhild, who gave him a vessel which had the appearance of "a ship of war having a crew of sixty men."

Sailing for Ireland they lost their course during

a storm, and came to a part of the Irish coast "which strangers could not frequent with safety," not being in possession of the Norsemen. Here they anchored, but when the tide ebbed the Irish came towards the vessel intending "to draw her ashore"; for the water "was not deeper than their armpits, or the girdle of the tallest." Aulaf began to parley with the assailants, who insisted that, according to their laws, vessels in such a position could be claimed as wreck. Aulaf admitted that such might be the law if foreigners had not interpreters aboard, but as he spoke Irish his property was not liable to seizure; and he was prepared to defend it.

Aulaf and his companions then seized their arms, and "ranged them along the sides of the vessel" which they "covered with their shields as a bulwark." Aulaf himself ascended the prow "having on his head a golden helmet," in his hand a spear, his breast being covered by a shield "on which a lion was emblazoned" and, thus prepared, awaited the attack. At this critical moment the "King of Ireland," Murkertac, arrived; an explanation ensued, as evidence of identity Aulaf produced a "gold ring" which had been given his mother "on the appearance of her first tooth." Murkertac recognised the token, and acknowledged him as his grandson. He then invited him and his companions to land, having first appointed proper

persons to take charge of his ship and "to draw it upon the beach," the usual practice when the voyage was ended.

Aulaf, now in favour with Murkertac, accompanied him everywhere, and on one occasion—no doubt the above—attended him on board his own ship against the Vikings. He also accompanied him to Dublin, where he was received with joy by the citizens, who proposed to make him king.

Aulaf, however, declined the honour, and loaded with presents returned to Iceland, where he "drew his ship ashore," and was visited by his mother.

Nial's Saga adds that Aulaf brought from Ireland an Irish dog—a wolf dog—called "Samus" of huge size, equal to a second man as a follower, and endowed with sagacity which enabled him to distinguish friends from foes.

The story makes Aulaf the grandson of Murkertac; but he must have been his nephew. The journey to Dublin where Murkertac and his guest were so well received, was undertaken immediately on his return from the Hebrides.

During his absence Callaghan of Cashel, King of Munster, with the Danes, had attacked the Deisi and Ossorians with whom he had formed an alliance—for in this year (939) he had married Duvdaria, daughter of Ceallach, Prince of Ossory, on the death of his first wife Flanna, daughter of King Donogh (*ob.* 938).

Callaghan was the most troublesome and turbulent of the provincial kings at this time, often acting in concert with the Danes, and in opposition to the monarch, Donogh, who lacked those qualities necessary to deal with such a character; and in consequence on occasions forfeited the sympathy and support of his best friend and ablest commander, Murkertac himself, who twice found himself arrayed in arms against him, when "God pacified them,"—in 927 when he interrupted the Fair of Tailtin; and again in 937. And this when, as Crown Prince, he might have been fighting his battles.

Murkertac now prepared to march into Munster against Callaghan; and for this purpose he assembled his forces at Aileach, and selected a thousand hardy warriors, according to the story, in the following manner: He erected a tent on the lawn of the palace and placed a furious hound at one jamb of the door and a man with a broad spear at the other jamb. If the chosen one did not shrink from the attacks of man or beast he was placed aside among the elect, of whom there were found but 1000 men. Each man he supplied with a leather cloak—an invention of his own—as a protection against the weather, hence his surname Murkertac *na Cocaill Croicean*, or Murkertac of the Leather Cloaks.

With these warriors he set out in the depth of

winter, when he knew that his enemies would be unprepared, to make the circuit of Ireland; and not only to take Callaghan as a hostage, but likewise all those princes and chiefs whom he conceived would be likely to oppose the monarch, and his future elevation to the throne of Ireland.

He first entered Ulidia, and carried off the prince of that territory. Then proceeding through Arghialla and Meath to Dublin, he fettered Sitric, brother of the Danish king, Godfrey. Near Dunlavin the Leinstermen assembled over night to oppose his progress, but at dawn of day they prudently retired, when Murkertac marched to Dun Aillin, where he took Lorcan, King of Leinster. The Munstermen next surrendered, when Callaghan was fettered; and in Connaught Conor, son of Tiege, presented himself. With these royal hostages he returned to Aileach and having spent some months there in feasting, handed them over to the monarch.

On this expedition, which, according to the *Four Masters*, was undertaken in 939, he was accompanied by his chief bard Cormacan, the playmate of his father, who has left us a minute description of his achievements in the following poem, translated by O'Donovan, with notes, and printed and published by the Irish Archaeological Society in *Tracts relating to Ireland*, 1841-8.

THE CIRCUIT OF IRELAND.

CORMACAN THE POET, SON OF MÆLBRIGID

THE CHIEF BARD, CECINIT A.D. 942.

Muirchertach son of valiant Niall;
Thou hast taken the hostages of Innisfail;
Thou has brought them all to Aileach,
Into the stone-built Grianan (palace) of steeds.

Thou didst go forth from us with one thousand heroes,
Of the race of Eogan of the red weapons
To make the circuit of all Erin,
O Muirchertach of the Yellow hair!

Whereas no longer lives Cuchullin the comely
The beautiful foster son of the just Conchobhar (*a*)
On thee has descended the renown of his shield
O son of the son of Aedh Finnlaith.

If Fergus Mac Roich were living,
(To whom Meadbh gave honour)
He would not be thy superior in valour
O Muirchertach of the great steeds!

If Curoi of the oars were living,
(O good son! O Mariner!)
He would become subject to thee with his house
Even Curoi M'Daire of the fair hands,

The day that thou didst set out from us eastwards
Into the fair province of Conchobhair,
Many were the tears down beautiful cheeks
Among the fair-haired women of Aileach.

We were a night at Oenach Cros—(*b*)
(Not more delightful to be in Paradise)—
We brought Loingseach of Line (*c*)
From the midst of that land of promise.

We were a night at Dun Eachadh, (*d*)
With the white-handed warlike band,
We carried the King of Ulaid with us
In the great circuit we made of all Ireland.

We were a night at the level Magh Rath · (*e*)
A night at the bright Glinn Righe · (*f*)
A night at Casan Line (*g*)
It was a hard night of good light.

A night at the clear Ath Gabhla · (*h*)
On the morrow we passed over Breagh Magh (*i*)
We found frost on the snow
On the delightful fair Magh n-Ealta (*j*)

We were a night at the fair Ath Cliath (*k*)
It was not pleasing to the Galls (*i.e.* Danes)
There was a damsel in the strong fortress
Whose soul the son of Nial was
She came forth until she was outside the walls,
Although the night was constantly bad.

A plentiful supply from an abundant store was given
(by the Danes)
To Murchertach the son of Nial
Of bacon, of good wheat
Together with penalties for blood-shed in red gold.

Joints of meat and fine cheese were given
By the very good, the very beautiful Queen;
And there was given with liberality
A coloured mantle for every chieftain.

We carried off with us Sitric the wealthy;
To me was assigned the duty of keeping him;
And there was not put upon him a manacle,
Nor polished tight fetter.

We were a night at Liamhain (*l*)
There were many in pursuit behind us
The Lagenians who assisted at Glen Mama (*m*)
And the curly race of Kennsealagh (*n*)

A conspiracy was formed against us at Glen Mama,
By the Lagenians very boldly
But they durst not approach us
When the bright day came.

We were a night at the cold Aillin (*o*)
The snow came from the north east,
Our only houses, without distinction of rank
Were our strong leather cloaks.

Lorcan descendant of Breasal of the cows
We carried off with us;—I speak no falsehood—
A rough bright fetter was fastened
Upon that Arch-King of populous Leinster.

A night we passed at Belach Mughna ; (*p*)
We did not wet our fine hair ;
The snow was on the ground before us
In the noisy Bealach Gabhran (*q*)

We were a night at the clear Fliodas ; (*r*)
We received food and ale
And hops were sent to our camp
By the hospitable chiefs of Ossory.

The reward of their hospitality was given to them,
To the men of Ossory in the Assembly,
Not a man of them returned to his house
Without a beautiful present of dress.

We were a night at the cold Magh Airbh (*s*)
At the wells of the long lived Britain
A night at the plain of Doire-More (*t*)
Where we received our due honour.

Coigny and tribute were offered,
With cheerfulness and with willingness
By the Deisi and the good men of Munster,
Their upright chiefs waited on us.

We were a night at Magh Feimhin (*u*)
Assuredly and certainly,
A night at Cashel of Munster
There the great injury was inflicted on the men of Munster.

There were arrayed against us, three battalions brave,
Impetuous, red, tremendous,
So that each party confronted the other
In the centre of the great plain.

We cast our cloaks off us,
As became the subjects of a good king
The comely, the bright Muirchertach, was at this time
Engaged in playing his chess.

The hardy Callaghan said,—
(And to us it was victory),—
" O men of Munster ! men of renown !
Oppose not the race of Eogan !

Better that I go with them as a hostage,
Than that we should all be driven to battle ;
They will kill man for man
The noble people of Muirchertach."

We took with us therefore Callaghan the just
Who received his due honour,
Namely, a ring of fifteen ounces on his hand,
And a chain of iron on his stout leg.

We were a night all together
In the plain of Hy Cairbre ; (*v*)
Our only shelter, our only woods,
Were our strong leather cloaks.

Music we had on the plain and in our tents,
Listening to its strains we danced awhile,
There methinks a heavy noise was made
By the shaking of our hard cloaks.

A night at the barren Cill-Da-Lua (*w*)
We next turned our faces towards Leth Chuinn,
A night at the strong Cean-Coradh, (*x*)
A night at Luimneach (*y*) of the azure stream.

We were a night at Ath Caille, (*z*)
On the very brink of the Shannon;
I did not meet since I left my home
A pass like unto Cretshalach (*a*).

A night at Sliabh-Suidhe-an-riogh (*b*)
Where we put away all our anxiety,
We were unable to warm ourselves
On the beautiful cold Magh Adhair. (*c*)

We were a night at the bright Loch Riabh (*d*)
With Muirchertach the son of Nial;
A night at Meadha Seola (*e*)
With Muirchertach the ever vigorous.

We found at Ath-mac-Cing (*f*)
The Kings of Connaught awaiting us;
Gold and silver were given
To the handsome great band of many coloured garments.

Conchobhar, the son of Tadhg the bull-like,
The arch-king of Connaught, exceeding brave,
Came with us as a hostage, without a bright fetter
Into the green palace of Aileach.

A night in the green Magh Ai (*g*)
Another night at Rath Guaire (*h*)
Delightful was the night—I will not conceal it—
On which we were at Srath-an-ghiren (*i*)

We were a night at the rapid Suil Damh (*j*)
With Muirchertach the son of Nial,
And we were not defeated,
Through the valour with which we fought.

We were a night at Ath Seanaigh (*k*)
Without treachery and without guile;
Dinner sufficient for an hundred, to be distributed to every twenty,
We received from the brave race of Conal.

We were a night at the everlasting Bearnas (*l*)
And it was delightful to our army;
We were a night before reaching our home
At Lig Inghine Laoidhigh (*m*)

We were a night on the green Magh-Glas (*n*)
On the morrow we reached our home to drink goblets.
There was a noise of rejoicing with glory,
In the great house of Muirchertach.

From the green Lochan na n-each (*o*)
A page was despatched to Aileach
To tell Dubhdaire of the black hair
To send women to cut rushes (*p*).

"Rise up, O Dubhdaire," spake the page,
"Here is company coming to thy house,
Attend each man of them,
As a monarch should be attended."

"Tell to me," she answered, "what company comes hither,
To the lordly Aileach Rigreann
Tell me, O fair page
That I may attend them."

"The Kings of Erin in fetters," he replies
"With Muirchertach, son of warlike Nial,
A thousand heroes of distinguished valour,
Of the race of the fierce fair Eogan."

The son of the living God was pleased
With Muirchertach, the son of Nial;
Long in possession of the sovereignty of Banbha (*q*)
Be the descendant of Nial Frassach the most valiant.

The noble kings were attended,
According to the pleasure of the race of Nial,
Without sorrow, without gloom in the house
As if they had been clerics.

Ten score hogs—no small work,—
Ten score cows, two hundred oxen,
Were slaughtered at the festive Aileach
For Muirchertach of the great fetters.

Three score vats of curds (*r*)
Which banished the hungry look of the army,
With a sufficiency of cheering mead,
Were given by the magnanimous Muirchertach.

Twelve vats of choice mead
Were given to the Kings of Erin,
The dinner of an hundred of each kind of food, nobly,
Was given gratuitously to them from the Queen.

Sabia of Ballagh Gabhran, district of queens
Has surpassed the women of Erin,
In chastity, in wisdom, in purity,
In giving, in bestowing.

The blessing of every man with a tongue
Be on the good great daughter of Kellach (*s*)
And the blessing of the pure and glorious Christ
Be on the daughter of the King of Ossory.

I have not seen in South or North,
Throughout all Erin of red weapons,
I have not seen in West or East,
A woman like thy wife, O Muirchertach.

While the Kings of battle were detained
In the lordly Aileach Rigreann,
They received no Coigne from anyone else,
Except from the good Dubhdaire, the black,

O Dubhdaire it is not better
That any other youth than myself should be thankful.
God and man go thankful from the house
Of Dubhdaire, descendant of Tighernach.

The reward of her plenteous ale was given,
To the lovely modest-faced Dubhdaire
Out of the plunder of the cold Dalariada,
In gold, in oxen, in good cows.

Twenty cows for every cow, nobly,
Twenty oxen for every one ox,
Twenty hogs for every hog,—a good return—
Were given to Dubhdaire by Muirchertach.

At the end of five months,—a noble work,—
The Kings were led out in the plain,
To be brought to Donncadh, son of Flann,
To the great and splendid King of Meath.

"Here are the noble kings for thee,"
Said Muirchertach, the son of Nial,
"For thou O Donncadh, it's certain to me,
Art the best man of the men of Erin."

"Thou art better now thyself, O King!
With thee no one can vie;
It is thou who didst take captive the noble kings,
O Muirchertach, son of Great Nial."

"Thou art better thyself, O Donncadh, the black-haired,
Than any man in our land,
Whoever is in strong Tara,
He it is that is Monarch of Erin."

"Receive my blessing, nobly,
O son of Niall Glundubh, bright, pure,
May Tara be possessed by thee,
O prince of the bright Loch Febhail! (*i*)

May thy race possess Magh Breagh,
May they possess white-sided Tara,
May the hostages of the Gael be in thy house,
O good son, O Muirchertach!"

O MUIRCHERTACH.

Only when Muirchertach was urged by his clansmen to make war on the southern Hy Nials and to depose Donogh, did he send his hostages to Tara in testimony of his loyalty; for by accepting them Donogh was fairly well assured of the obedience and support of their subjects. Not to be outdone in generosity, however, Donogh refused

to accept them, as stated above, and sent them back to Aileach, where they remained until 943, when Muirchertach was slain in a skirmish with the Danes of Dublin, who were on their way to attack Armagh, under Blacaire, son of Godfrey, their king, at Ath Fhirdiah, now Ardee, Co. Louth.

In the *Annals of Ulster* this event is thus recorded: A.D. 943, Muirchertach, son of Nial (*i.e.*, Muirchertach of the Leather Cloaks), King of Aileach and the Hector of the West of the world was killed by gentiles on a Sunday, the 4th of the Kalends of March (*i.e.*, by Blacair, son of Godfraidh, King of the Dubh-Ghaill at Glas-liathan by the side of Cluain Cain of Fera Ros).

"Vengeance and ruin have fallen
On the race of Clann Cuinn (*u*) for ever,
As Muirchertach does not live, alas!
The Country of the Gaedhil will ever be an orphan."

Thus in the fifth year of his reign, fell Muirchertach na Cocall Croiceann, the greatest warrior of his day.

Dr. O'Conor (*Dissertations on the History of Ireland*) says of him that he had "as great a genius for war as any man this island has perhaps ever produced . . . of all enemies he was the most generous, of all commanders the most affable . . . elevated, benevolent and captivating, he

was unhappily taken off at a time when his character put him in possession of a power which probably would have relieved his country from bondage."

By his first wife he left two sons, Donal, his successor, and Flaherty; and a daughter Dunflaith, who married first, Donal, King of Meath, son of Donogh, by whom she was mother of Malachy II., surnamed More or the Great.

By her second husband Aulaf, King of Dublin, she left a son Gluniaran, or Iron Knee, mentioned in the *Annals* as "the son of Malachy's mother." Aulaf was a Christian and the son of Sitric, King of the Danes of Northumberland, by his wife Editha, daughter of Edward the Elder, the first Saxon King of all England and grand-daughter of Alfred the Great. He died at Hy, in Scotland, in 979, and according to Ware's *Annals* was succeeded by Gluniaran. The year following Murkertac's death Donogh, the Ard Ri died and was succeeded by his nephew and Murkertac's cousin, Congallah, Lord of Breagh.

NOTES.

(*a*) This Conchobhar or Conor McNessa was King of Ulster in the first century A.D. He lived in the palace of Emania, now the Navan Fort near Armagh. Under him flourished the Red Branch Knights, whose commander was Cuchullain, the mightiest of the heroes of Irish romance. He had his residence at Dundalgan, now called Castletown Moat, near Dundalk. Under him were Conal Cearnach, ancestor of the O'Mores of Leix; Keltar of the Battles, who lived at Rath Keltar, the great fort beside Downpatrick; Fergus M'Roich or M'Roy; the poet Bricrin of the Venom Tongue, who lived at Loughbrickland, where his fort is still to be seen near the little lake; and the three sons of Usna.

Contemporary with the Red Branch Knights were the Degads of Munster, whose great chief, Curoi Mac Daire, resided in his stone fort palace on the side of Cahirconlee mountains; and the Gamanradii of Connaught, commanded by Keth Mac Magach. The stories of this period in which the above and many others figure, form by far the finest part of our ancient romantic literature.—Joyce's *Soc. Hist. of Ir.*

(*b*) Ænach cros in Co. Antrim is not identified by O'Donovan.

(*c*) Line alias Magh Line or Moylinny a fertile plain in Antrim extending from Lough Neagh to near Carrickfergus.

(*d*) Dun Eachdach now Dunaghy on the banks of the river Ravel in Co. Antrim, barony of Conway.

(*e*) Magh Rath now Moira, Co. Down.

(*f*) Glin Righe was the valley of the Newry river which divided the Counties Down and Armagh.

(*g*) Casan Linne, now River Lagan, Co. Down.

(*h*) Ath Gabhla or Ford of Gabhla on the river Boyne, Co. Meath, near Knowth.

(*i*) Breagh Magh or Magh Breagh, Latinized Bregia, between Dublin and Drogheda.

(*j*) Magh n Ealta, the ancient name of the territory between Dublin and the Hill of Howth.

(*k*) Ath Cliath or Bally Ath Cliath, *i.e.*, the Town of the Ford of Hurdles, now Dublin.

(*l*) Liamhan or Dun Liamhan, now Dunlavan, an ancient seat of the Kings of Leinster.

(*m*) Glen Mama is the name of a valley near Dunlavan.

(*n*) Ui Kennsealagh or race of Enna Cennsealagh, who killed Nial of the Nine Hostages. Their territory comprised the present County Wexford, part of Carlow and the Barony of Shillelagh, Co. Wicklow.

(*o*) Aillin, now Knocaulin, Co. Kildare, formerly a palace of the Kings of Leinster.

(*p*) Bealach Mughna now Ballymoon, Co. Carlow.

(*q*) Bealach Gabhrain, *i.e.*, the road or pass of Gabhran, now Gowran, Co. Kilkenny.

(*r*) Fliodas was the name of a river in Ossory now forgotten.

(*s*) Magh Airbh, a celebrated plain in Ossory nearly co-extensive with the present barony of Crannagh, Co. Kilkenny. Ossory comprised the best part of Co. Kilkenny and the S. W. part of Queen's County. The wells of Britan (Tidbradaibh Britan), now Tubbrid Britain, Barony of Crannagh, County Kilkenny.

(*t*) Doire More or Derrymore, a plain in the territory of the O'Carrols (Ely) near Roscrea.

(*u*) Magh Feimin, a plain in Munster in the neighbourhood of Clonmel. From Callaghan, who was King of Munster at this time (*ob.* 954) sprang the M'Carthys and O'Callaghans and other families.

(*v*) The plain of Hy Cairbre was the level country extending from the river Shannon towards Kilmallock, Co. Limerick.

(*w*) Cill Duala, now Killaloe on the Shannon.

(*x*) Cean Coradh or Kencora, the palace of the O'Briens, Kings of Thomond or North Munster. South Munster or Desmond was ruled by the M'Carthys.

(*y*) Luimneach or Limerick.

(*z*) Ath Caille. Not identified.

(*a*) Cretshalach, now Cratlagh, near Limerick.

(*b*) Sliabh-Suidhe-an-riagh, or Slieve-Oighidh-an-righ, *i.e.*, the mountain of the Death of the King, now the Cratloe mountains, north of the City of Limerick. This place is referred to in Chapter II.

(*c*) Magh Adhair in Co. Clare, where the princes of Thomond were inaugurated.

(*d*) Now Lough Ree, Co. Galway.

(*e*) Meadha Seola, a hill near Castle Hackett, Co. Galway.

(*f*) Ath Mac Cing, now Headford, Co. Galway.

(*g*) Magh Ai, a plain in Roscommon.

(*h*) Rath Guaire, now probably Dun Guaire, anciently Durlus, near Kinvarra, Co. Galway.

(*i*) Srath-an-ghiren, *i.e.*, the meadow of the just man, not identified.

(*j*) Suil Damh. Not identified.

(*k*) Ath Seanaigh, now Ballyshannon, Co. Donegal.

(*l*) Bearnas, *i.e.*, the gap or chasm, a remarkable gap in Barony of Tir Hugh, Co. Donegal. Referred to in the *Tripartite Life* (extract Chapter II.).

(*m*) Ligh Inghin Laoidhigh. Not identified.

(*n*) Magh Glas, Barony Raphoe. Not identified.

(*o*) Lochan na n-each, *i.e.*, the small lake of the horse. Not identified.

(*p*) "To send women into the rushes," *i.e.*, to send women to cut rushes and strew them on the floors and perhaps make beds for the soldiers. The custom of strewing the floor with green rushes is still common in Ireland and continued in England to the reign of Elizabeth.

(*q*) Eire, Fodhla and Banba—Bardic names for Ireland—were the three Queens of the last Tuatha De Danaan Kings, M'Cuill, M'Ceacht and M'Greine, who were slain at the battle of Tailtin by Heremon and his brothers. M'Cuill and his brothers resided at Aileach, said to have been built by their ancestor Neid or Ned, hence Aileach Neid. According to another story Aileach was built by Rigreann or Frigreann, a Scottish chief, in the reign of Fiacha Sravtene, hence Aileach Rigreann or Frigreann. See Chapter I.

(*r*) Curds were much used by the Irish as an article of food.

(*s*) Ceallach King of Ossory was killed in the battle of Ballymoon. From his grandson, Gillapatrick, son of Donogh, who died in 996, the Princes of Ossory took their name of M'Gillapatrick, now changed to Fitz Patrick. Lord Castletown, grandson of the last Earl of Upper Ossory, is the present Chief. See Burke's *Extinct Peerages* and O'Hart. Many of the Ossory princes were Kings of Leinster. The princedoms of this province were, in addition to Ossory: Offaly, Leix, Hy Faelan and Hy Kinsellagh. The chiefs were O'Conor Faly and O'Dempsey; O'More, O'Byrne and O'Toole; and M'Murrough Kavanagh.

(*t*) Loch Febhail or Lough Foyle.

(*u*) Clan Cuinn, *i.e.*, descendants of Conn Cead Catha.

CHAPTER X.

DONAL OF ARMAGH, KING OF IRELAND, A.D. 954-78. THE FIRST "O'NEILL."

HEN Congallah succeeded to the monarchy in 943, Donal, son of Murkertac, was chosen as his heir apparent. In the following year he overthrew the Danes of Lough Neagh, and destroyed their fleet, after killing their king.[1]

In 945, as an offering for himself and his clansmen, he gave the full of St. Patrick's Bell of silver to the Archbishop of Armagh.[2] Two years later his brother Flaherty fell in an engagement with the chief of Tyrconnel—O'Canannan—at Magh Li.[3]

In 954 he succeeded to the monarchy, on the death of Congallah—who was ambushed and slain by the Danes in returning from the chariot races at the Curragh — when he made his visitation, or royal progress, through the kingdom to receive the allegiance and hostages of the provincial kings and princes, who were particularly troublesome in his reign, so much so that he was obliged to make another visitation in 960, when he remained three

[1] *Annals of Ulster; Four MM.* [2] *Idem.* [3] *Id.*

days encamped at Rath Edain,[1] a place not identified.

In these visitations the Ard Ri, who was received with much state and formality by the provincial kings, always proceeded in the same direction—sunwise.[2] On his march the provincial king and princes, according to the Brehon Laws, escorted him as far as the residence of the neighbour king. The provincial kings and princes followed the same course on their visitations, and were received and escorted similarly, being entertained, with their retinue, free of charge by the sub-chiefs.

In 961 Donal brought boats from the Dabhall or Blackwater, and cleared the islets or crannoges of Lough Ennel, near Mullingar, which appear to have been inhabited by the Danes.

These crannoges or lake dwellings were much in use at this time, doubtless owing to the disturbed state of the country.

Giraldus in his *Topography of Ireland*, written about the year 1185, says of them: "These lakes (of Ireland) encompass some slightly elevated spots, most delightfully situated, which, for the sake of security and because they are inaccessible except by boats, the lords of the soil appropriate as their places of refuge and seats of residence."

The crannoge dwellings were in use from the most remote pre-historic times and continued in

[1] *Four Masters.* [2] Joyce's *Soc. Hist.*

use down to the reign of Elizabeth. In some cases the original crannoge dwelling was replaced by a castle, of which the best existing example is the Hags' Castle in Lough Mask, Co. Mayo (See Joyce's *Soc. Hist.* Vol. II.).

In 963 Donal took hostages from O'Rorke of Breffny, King of Connaught, who had raided Tyrone some time before, penetrating as far as the fortress of Inis Eanaigh, now Inchenny, Co. Tyrone, near Strabane, where Hugh, son of Flaherty, heir of Aileach, was slain.

Two years later Murchad Eagle Knee (Glunillar, the Prince of Aileach) repulsed another invasion at Formael, now Formil, Co. Tyrone, where Murkertac, son of Tiege, heir apparent of Connaught, and Malissa O'Canannan, Chief of Tyrconnell, fell. This Murchad, grandson of Flaherty, succeeded Flaherty, grandson of Donal, in 960; and died in 972 at Dun Cloitighe, now Dunglady, a very remarkable fort consisting of three circumvallations with deep ditches in the parish of Maghera, Co. Londonderry (O'Donovan, *Four Masters*).

After him, Fergal, son of Conaing, son of Nial Glunduff—Donal's first cousin—was elected.

About this time one of Donal's clansmen having been wounded by M'Coisé, chief bard to the O'Melaghlins, some of his troops in revenge, demolished the poet's castle of Clara. Donal was informed of this by M'Coisé, who on this occasion

composed that curious tract called the "Plunder of the Castle of Maelmilscotach," of which O'Curry (*Manners and Customs*) gives the following particulars:

THE PLUNDER OF THE CASTLE OF MAELMILSCOTACH.

It was Urard M'Coisé that framed this piece of composition for the O'Neills of Ulster, who had unlawfully plundered his castle at Clartha (now Clara, Co. Westmeath), in revenge for his having wounded one of their people named Muiredach, son of Eogan. They demolished the poet's castle and carried off his household furniture and his precious jewels as well as his cows and his horses. The poet was absent at the time; and on his return to his family he saw no prospect of redress against enemies so powerful, unless by the exercise of his art and the influence it gave him, and to this he had recourse. After some time, then, he set out to the palace of Aileach, where he arrived rather early in the day, and before the king had risen; but when the monarch had heard of the arrival of such a guest—welcome as a great poet and historian was, everywhere, in those days—he at once ordered him to his presence; and having warmly received him he proceeded to demand of him what tales he had to recite in the exercise of his art. M'Coisé answered that he had a great many, and begged that the king would select from the ancient

chief historic tales of Erin, one or more that he should wish to hear.

The king requested the poet to give him the names of these great tales, in order that he might be the better able to make a selection. The poet then repeats the list — beginning with the death of Cuchulain—with all of which the king seemed to be familiar except the last, to which he had given the title of "The Plunder of the Castle of Maelmilscotach, the son of the Venerable Name, son of the Noble Teacher of the Hosts, son of the *Ollamh* in poetry, son of Legitimate Poetry, son of *Lughaidh*, Master of all the Arts, son of the Red Man of all Knowledge, son of the Faith of the Holy Spirit with the Father and the Son."

These were the wild names, and such the symbolical pedigree which M'Coisé made for himself; while the "Plunder of the Castle of Maelmilscotach," of which he proposed to give the history, was in fact but the plunder of his own castle of Clartha. The name Maelmilscotach which M'Coisé gave himself, means *Mael* "of the honeyed words" from *mil* honey, and *Scoth*, a word. *Lughaidh*, "Master of all the Arts," whom he counts among his ancestors, was the celebrated Tuatha De Danaan Chief, Lug, the son of Cian, more commonly called *Lug Mac Ceithleen*, from his mother. The "Red Man of all Knowledge" (*Ruadh Rofheasa*) was the celebrated De Danaan King, the great Daghda.

And M'Coisé makes use of the names of these two personages to symbolise his intimate acquaintance with all the Pagan literature of ancient Erin, in the same way that he makes his descent from the Holy Spirit, the Father, and the Son, the symbol of his intimate knowledge of the Christian literature of the time.

When the king heard the title of this tale and the name and pedigree of the lord of the plundered castle, he declared that he had never before heard of it, and eagerly desired to hear the full history of the plunder alluded to.

M'Coisé then commenced the tale by relating the circumstance that led to his loss, and describing in a very imaginative style the character and prowess of the parties who took part in the violence of which he complained. It was somewhat as follows :—

At the approach of the hostile party to the castle, the beautiful nymph Poetry, daughter of the Arts, who resided within, ascended to the top of the building, to beseech them to spare it on her account, for she believed that her inviolability would save it from any injury. With this view she accosted the spokesman of the party, asking who and what they were, what they wanted, and what were the names of their leaders.

The spokesman answers by giving their names according to their etymological signification; such

as "Tené n-aen beimé," which means literally "fire of one stroke," that is, the fire struck by one stroke of a flint. This fire is evidently but a spark; and the Irish for a spark of fire is *Aedh*, or Udh, as it is pronounced; and Aedh is the proper Christian name of a man (now Anglicised Hugh).

The name of the second chief man of the party was *Nuall Domain* ("the noblest of the world") of which two words the Christian name Domhnall (now Donal or Donnell) is but a condensed transposition.

The name of the third champion he said was *Nel Mac Laeich Lasamain* ("Light, the son of the Blazing Warrior"). This *Nell* (or Niall, as the name is more commonly written) was son of the Hugh mentioned above, whose name was interpreted fire or flame. And so the spokesman goes on to give the names of the chief men of his party under these obscure designations.

The nymph Poetry then enquires whether the assailants would not prefer the precious jewels of poetic eloquence and eulogium to the torturing lashes of poetic satire, of both of which she had, she said, an abundant stock to bestow, from the laudations of Mac Lonain, the satires of Moran, the eloquence of Laidech, the stories of Laech Liathmhuim, the obscure proverbs of Fithal, the philosophy of Ferceirtnes, the intellect of the poetess Edain, the brilliancy of Nera, the clear truths of the princess, Mor Mumhan, etc.

The answer which the plunderers made to this enquiry was a furious assault on the mansion, which they soon entered and proceeded to strip of all its movable property.

Having emptied the house above ground, they next approached the cellar under ground; and here they were met at its doors by Daithghel, the guardian of that important place. The assailants asked Daithghel who were the defenders of the cellars and if they were brave, to which he answers that they were the bravest and best of the household, both men and women. And Daithghel gives them the names of a formidable band by personifying the various articles of furniture, etc., in the house; such as *Criol mac Craeslinaidh*, that is, Chest, son of Fill-mouth; *Bolc mac Bith-thellaigh*, that is, Bellows, son of Constant Fireplace; *Breacan mac Ban-ghresa*, that is, Blanket, son of Woman's Work; *Fidhbha mac Fochraebhaigh*, that is Hatchet, son of Tree Cutter; *Leṡan mac Dagh-ṡhuaithe*, that is, Bag, son of Good Yarn; *Coine mac Cruadh-ghobhan*, that is, Pot, son of Hardy Smith; *Cuigh mac Tornora*, that is, Wooden Mug, the son of Turner; *Loimdha mac Lomhthogha*, that is, Churn Stuff, son of Choice Hands;—and so on. Such were the names of a few of the male defenders of the cellar; and the following were the names of a few of its female inmates: *Lenninghen Lamhthoraidh*, that is, Mantle, the daughter of Manufacture;

Leine inghen Linghuirt, that is, Shirt, daughter of Flax-field; *Ceirtle inghen Suimhaire*, that is, Ball or Bottom, daughter of Distaff; *Suathad ingen Iniomai*, that is, Needle, daughter of Stitcher; *Corthair inghen Druinighé*, that is, Fringe, daughter of Embroideress;—and so on.

I have dwelt at greater length than I intended on the names of these fanciful guardians of Maelmilscotach's cellar, because, though I have given but a few of them, they will serve to show how the castle was furnished in articles of domestic convenience, so as to afford some interesting examples (which, though somewhat out of place here, I should be loth to pass over) of the ordinary appliances of domestic industry in the home of an Irish housewife a thousand years ago.

In the piece which I am now describing M'Coisé continues to relate, with much force, the progress of the plunder of the castle.

The enormity of the act is considerably increased in his account, by his stating that it was while Maelmilscothach himself had been engaged attending on the king in one of his expeditions, and in the king's presence, that an account of the plunder of his mansion reached him. Upon hearing this, continues M'Coisé, the king exclaimed: "Reproach me not; for the sky shall fall on the earth, the sea shall overleap its boundaries, and the human race shall be swept away, or thou shalt have restitution

of the plundered property, together with full compensation for the violation of thy castle, in such manner as the men of Erinn shall adjudge, in my presence."

The king having thus promised material redress to Maelmilscothach, the latter then recalls "the six bloodhounds," which the just administration of the king had induced him to banish from him some years before.

The names of these hounds in the story are Satire, Disgrace, Shame, Blush, Abuse, and Bitter Words; and these he sent after the plunderers to bring them immediately before the king. They were foiled, however, by "six fanciful pigs" which the plunderers sent against them; so that the king had, at last, to send out his own herald to command them to his presence.

In the meantime the king called a council of the chiefs of his country, to take their advice as to what should be done for Maelmilscothach; and they unanimously recommended that full restitution should be made to him.

When M'Coisé had thus fully described the wrongs done to Maelmilscothach, and the justice rendered him, he ends by avowing to the monarch, that he was himself the plundered Maelmilscothach, and that Domhnall O'Neill himself, was the king whose people had plundered him.

He then addressed the person whom he supposed

to have been the leader of the plundering party in a poem of eighteen stanzas; but, though addressed to this person, it was intended as a panegyric on the king himself, and his family and race (the Clan Neill of Ulster); and he takes care to remind the king that M'Coisé had been the tutor of himself and his brother, and that he had been reared by their father, Murkertac of the Leather Cloaks.

This curious poem begins:

"O thou, yonder man, by our words of knowledge,
If it be thou that hast caused this disturbance
Verily it is not without punishment (or) without battle,
That Maelmilscothach's Castle shall have been plundered."

King Domhnall O'Neill really did call a council to advise with them upon what should be done in M'Coisé's case; and the chiefs left it in the king's own hands to punish the guilty parties as he should think proper; but offered for themselves a cow for every commander and royal champion in all Tir Eoghan, to M'Coisé as restitution.

In the meantime the chief historians, poets, and judges of Erin repaired to the king's presence to demand, if necessary, a compensation proportionate with his rank for M'Coisé, for the insult and violation offered to his sacred person and dignity; but the king having already conceded this he had

now only to call upon them to "assess the damages," according to the ancient law which provided for such cases.

All parties thereupon agreed in requesting to have the case submitted to the decision of Flann, "the eloquent," the head professor of the great school of Clonmacnoise. This was done accordingly; and Flann awarded the poet full restitution of his property; full repairs of any injury which his house might have sustained, and in addition 14 Cumhals (of three cows each), or forty-two cows and "the breadth of his face of gold," as compensation for the violation of his personal and professional dignity. And the learned men present on the occasion confirmed this decision and, with the consent of the king, and his chiefs, fixed these as the damages to be ever after paid in all similar cases.

This tale, Dr. O'Curry adds, is remarkable for the vigour and purity of the language in which it is told, and it is especially useful for the important corroboration which it contains of the authenticity of other ancient tracts and pieces which go more or less into minute descriptions of the state of civilization and social economy of the Gael, so far back at least as a thousand years.

In 966 Donal was obliged to march against the Leinstermen and Danes, whose territory he wasted from the Barrow eastward to the sea. He then

besieged the latter for two months; and carried off great spoils from the Leinstermen.

A few months later the Danes and Leinstermen under Sitric, son of Aulaf, and Murchad, son of Finn, King of Leinster, plundered Kells; but on their return they were overtaken by Donal and compelled to disgorge after a sharp engagement. They again returned in 968; and this time joined by the Clan Colman or O'Melaghlins, Princes of Meath, gave him an overthrow at Ardmulchan, near Navan.

Seeing the Southern Hy Nials turned against him he proceeded to devastate their territory, as the principal means of reducing them to obedience. With his son and heir, Murkertac, he attacked Drumenesclan and Monasterboice, and other places, and slew many of the Danes, 300 of whom were burned to death in one fortress at Dunleer.

The Clan Colman however, aided by the Leinstermen and Danes, obliged him to evacuate Meath; but he soon returned at the head of a numerous army; and after taking their forts and fortresses, he erected a camp in every cantred, or territory; and spoiled Offaly, the patrimony of Murchad, King of Leinster, and Fotharta.

Still the Danes proved troublesome, and in 975, his son Murkertac, with Congallagh, Lord of Breagh, son of Donal, was slain by their King, Aulaf Cuaran, son of Sitric

This Aulaf was Murkertac's uncle, being married, as remarked in the last chapter, to his aunt, Dunflaith—Donal's sister. Aulaf was head of the Hy Ivar, or descendants of Ivar, King of Dublin, who became King of Northumberland in 867. Ivar was the son of Ragnar Lodbroc, King of Norway and Denmark, from whom most of the Norse Kings descended. He died in Dublin in 872, and left two sons, Godfrey and Sitric, who, according to Haliday (*Scandinavian Kingdom of Dublin*) invaded France in 882 and exacted from Charles the Fat the enormous tribute of 12,000 lbs. of silver. Godfrey married Giselda, daughter of the Emperor Lothair, grandson of Charlemagne, and was slain by his brother Sitric, who died King of Dublin and Northumberland in 894. Godfrey, his son and successor, was father of Nial, Sitric, and Reginald, by whom Nial Glunduff was defeated. Sitric, who died King of Northumberland in 926, was father of Aulaf or Olaf, as the name is now spelled. Aulaf's first wife was a daughter of Constantine, King of Scotland (son of Kenneth M'Alpin) with whose nephew, Constantine II., he was defeated at the great battle of Brunanburgh in Northumbria in 937,[1] by his uncle, Athelstan, King of England, who thus got possession of his (Aulaf's) Kingdom of Northumbria. He was now at the head of the Danes of Dublin ; and in alliance

[1] *History of England.*

with the Leinstermen and other malcontents greatly disturbed the peace of Donal's reign.

In 978, the last year of his reign, he was attacked at Kilmona by the son of the above Congallah (Donal) who joined with the Danes in the hope of gaining the sovereignty. But Malachy, King of Meath, Donal's nephew and heir apparent, at the head of the royal troops, defeated the combined forces with terrible slaughter at the battle of Tara, where Raghnall, son of Aulaf, and many others were slain.

Shortly after this Donal, wearied with the strife and turmoil, retired to the Monastery of Armagh, where he died, and where, according to the *Annals of Clonmacnoise* he "resided a long time to doe penance and thereof was called Donal of Ardmach."

Of him and Murion, Abbot and Bishop of Hy, and a very learned man, Dubdaleth says:

From the birth of the son of God,—no falsehood,—
Eight seventy and nine hundred,
Till the death of Mughrion, whom verses extol,
The comely successor of Columbkille,
Till the battle of strong Teamhair
Wherein blood was spilled over shields
Wherein the Gaels and Galls were slaughtered
By the noble famous Maelseachlain,
And till the death of Domnall Ua Neill
Of Ardmach of majestic hostages,
Monarch of Ireland, who bestowed horses
Than whom a worthier man,
On the surface of the earth was never born.[1]

[1] *Four Masters.*

In 980-5 the *Annalists* record the death of More, daughter of Donogh, son of Ceallach (Prince of Ossory ? and) Queen of Ireland, evidently Donal's Queen.

In his reign is placed the date of a pretended Charter of the English King Edgar, nephew of Athelstan, claiming dominion over the "greatest part of Ireland with its most noble city of Dublin." The original of this charter, which is given in Usher's *Sylloge*, is preserved according to that authority in Worcester Cathedral, and there is a copy of it among the records of the Tower.

Even were this strange document authentic, which has long ceased to be assumed, the boastful character of Edgar, as Moore[1] remarks, would account sufficiently for its large pretensions without having regard to any more substantial grounds.

Ware in his *Annals*, on the authority of it, records under 962 that "about this time Edgar, King of England, subdued a great part of Ireland and particularly the city of Dublin."

To Donal's regard for learning and to his liberality to the poets and historians of his time, may be ascribed the many valuable compositions dated in his reign.

For him Eochy O'Ceirin composed the long poem on Aileach preserved in the *Book of Lecan*

[1] *History of Ireland.*

and published with an English translation by Petrie in the *Ordnance Memoir of Londonderry*.

The author of this poem, quoted in the second chapter, states in the 67th stanza that the monarch of Erin then reigning was Donal O'Neill, the 16th monarch of the race of Eoghan, or Clanna Neill.

The poem on Aileach, preserved in the *Books of Lecan* and *Ballymote*, by the celebrated sage Flann Mainistrech, or Flann of Monasterboice, gives the name of every king who reigned at Aileach from Donal back to Eoghan.

In another poem he says of O'Ceirin's history :

"Should any one attempt to relate
The history of host-crowded Aileach,
After Eochy the illustrious
It would be wresting the sword
Out of Hector's hand." [1]

Donal was the first of his family to assume the surname of Ua Niall (*i.e.*, grandson of Nial) which, like other Irish names, is generally written in English as it is pronounced,—O'Neill.

This is about the earliest instance of an hereditary surname to be met with, and goes to show that they first came into use in Ireland—as they did in France and England—in his time, and not, as Keating informs us, in the reign of Brian Boru, who, he says, was the first to ordain that the

[1] *Manners and Customs.*

descendants of the heads of tribes and families, then in power, should take their names, either from their father, (by prefixing *Mac*) or grandfather (by prefixing Ua, or O). and that these names should be hereditary, in order that it might be known more easily from what stock each family was descended.

Donal, by More, daughter of Donogh, son of Ceallach; or by More, daughter of Tiege, son of Cathal, son of Conor, King of Connaught, who died, according to the *Chronicle of the Scots* in 990, left at least three sons, Murkertac, styled na Midhe, or of Meath—most probably from having been fostered there—who was slain as before stated in 975, in which year, according to the *Annals of Ulster*, his son Flaherty an Trostain was born. Hugh, born in 974; and Muredach, obviously the same mentioned in the next chapter. O'Donovan (*Miscellany of the Celtic Society*) says he was the eldest, which is unlikely.

CHAPTER XI.

HUGH O'NEILL, SON OF DONAL, AND HIS NEPHEW FLAHERTY, SURNAMED "OF THE PILGRIM'S STAFF," KINGS OF ULSTER A.D. 992 TO 1036.

UGH, the second, or third son of Donal, on coming of age in 992, was inaugurated Prince of Aileach and King of Ulster with great ceremony, by Mureaghan, Archbishop of Armagh, "in the presence of Patrick's congregation." (*a*). He reigned jointly with Fergal, grandson of Nial Glunduff, who was now an old man; and died A.D. 1000.

In 993 his kinsman Hugh, son of Duvgall, heir of Aileach, or *roydamna;* and Lord of Magh Itha, died. This Hugh was the grandson of Donogh, Tanist of Aileach (*ob.* 979), son of Donal, who was brother of Nial Glunduff.

The Tanist, as we have observed (Chapter V.) was the person elected to succeed the chief. The Roydamna (Ir. *righ-damhna, i.e.*, king material) or heirs, were the persons eligible to succeed in case of the Tanist's failure.

In 995 the men of Conailli in Louth, and Mughdorna, now the barony of Crioch Mughdorna, or Cremourne, Co. Monaghan, with the men of North Breagh, came on a foray into Tyrone, but at Glen Righe, or the valley of the Newry river, they were overtaken by Hugh, who recovered the prey after defeating them with the loss of O'Cronghilla, or O'Cronnelly, the Lord of Conailli, and others.

In the following year Malachy, heir of Aileach, son of Malroney, Tanist of Aileach (*sl.* 941), son of Flan, son of Donal, died. He left two sons, Lochlain, Lord of Inishowen and Magh Itha, and Nial, mentioned later on.

About this time the old succession to the monarchy, after enduring for more than five centuries, was broken by Malachy's great rival, Brian Boru, King of Munster, who, collecting an immense army in which nearly all the Danes of Ireland served, issued from his palace of Kincora, near Killaloe, and marching to Tara sent heralds to Malachy calling upon him to resign the crown or give battle.

Malachy promised battle, asking for a month's delay to muster his forces. This was granted, Brian meanwhile remaining encamped at Tara, little fearing the result of Malachy's exertions. To Hugh, and Cathal, King of Connaught, Malachy sent Gilla Comghall O'Slevin, chief poet of Ulster,

urging them to join and give battle to Brian. To Hugh, the bard addressed the following long poem : [1]

Ye have been requested to go southward
Ready too at Lis Luigheach (*b*)
To battle with the house of Tal,
From Teamhair of Fail has come the message.

Long does it seem to Erin, O Aedh,—
O delightful tree the head of the O'Neill
Until thou restorest Leth Chuinn to its right—
Until thou bring a wave of woe upon Brian.

The blessings of the men of Erin upon thee ;
Let not a coward in the field go with thee ;
On thee is all our hopes to-night—
Dispel its sorrow from the strong Magh Breagh.

For the sake of the Gaedhil take thy shield
Against that one man who injures all ;
Let not the hill of Teamhair come into Brian's possession—
With those who now possess it, let it be for ever.

Maelseachlain is thy brother,
Thy beloved sister is the mother whose son he is
Make battle for her, O Aedh,
They have equal rights to strong Teamhair of Breagh.

Let not externs carry it away from you ;
However difficult let peace be made between you ;
If not carried away in your time
It shall not be carried away until the end of time.

[1] *Wars of Gael and Gall.*

Defend Teamhair, mighty be your exertions!
Ye Clans of Nial, by the strength of your hands—
Let us not require to call you
It is not honourable to you that externs should disgrace us.

Noble is every union, glorious, renowned
Beautiful every brother battalion if it be a victory!
Prosperous by combining is each part,
Powerful against all evil is a numerous army.

The policy that is most proper for you,
Although not strong is this against Brian,
Surrender not the soft plain to any man,
Sweet are its drinks, and its meats.

Bring then the north of Erin with thee,
O Aedh, who art followed by all parties;
Let thy comrade bring with thee the south half
Suffer not your interest to be destroyed.

Let Eochy bring—long the march—
All the Ulaid—a noble company;
Let Cathal the warlike, the just, bring
The province of the illustrious men of Olnegmacht.(*c*)

Rise up thou before the armies,
Strengthen and harden their ranks;
If thou wilt go, all others will go,
Thou shalt be the better of it ever after.

O Son of Domnall, grandson of Nial the noble,
The bright sheen of the sun illumines thee—
Since thou art intent upon Teamhair for thyself
Thou shalt be king of Erin if thou wilt but come.

Lead us against Brian of Corc's Brugh, (*d*)
On Lughaidh's land be thy ravages
Go thou before us—slaughter attend thee—
Let not the disgrace of Erin be upon thee.

O Aedh, son of Donal, grandson of Nial,
Sit thou on the glorious Tower of Teamhair-Fail
Wrest the land of Art Aenfer from Brian,
Let hostages of every man be in thy hands.

Thou shalt be full King of Erin by coming
Let not the platform (*i.e.* Tara) become accustomed
to Lorc (*e*)
Since no reproach attaches to thee
Yield not Cormac's Hill to Corc

Direct the army in the track
Of Muirchertach of the red prowess
In vessels of glass he has washed thee
Unless thou advance thou shalt be advanced upon.

Serve not thou thyself a man of might,
Strike the king, except the supreme king;
Let all be in vassalage under thy stroke;
Nobler are the race of Nial than any might.

If thy renown shall spread afar,
As I have said, O descendant of Nial the brave!
The shout will not be a contest against thee
Which is raised by the hosts around Teamhair.

From the time of Cormac, grandson of just Conn,
To his race belongs the western hill,
But each man gave his ready life,
Nial's fort was not taken from Nial.

Of all the Kings of you that ruled Erin,
Of the sweet musical race of the sons of Nial,
No one of you came over a gap,
From any quarter to strong Teamhair.

Let him not come upon you—refuse not battle—
You are not dead flesh in foot or horse
O descendant of the three Cathals of the battle,
Leave not the house of thy fathers to any man.

'Tis no small valour, although the small is great,
'Tis with high renown that thou goest against Brian,
Although it's small comfort in us to say so,
'Tis a shame to have old Teamhair dragged to the west.

Covet thou Luimneach (Limerick) of ships,
For the purpose that thou mayst be remembered
For thee shall be the Liphe of Lorc,
Pull thou down Caiseal of Corc.

Thou art a person worthy of it;
If thou preserve thy worthiness in thy day—
If thou will act now to the last
To thee shall belong all the good that remains.

In answer to this touching appeal Hugh,—mindful of the fact that when his father held the throne he was expelled from Meath by Malachy's Sept (the Clan Colman)—said that when the Cinel Eoghan had Tara they defended its freedom, so whoever possesses it let him go and do likewise,

and moreover he said he was not going to give battle in defence of the sovereignty for any man.

On learning this Malachy himself went to Aileach and spoke to Hugh and offered him the sovereignty, saying: "I would rather be dependent on thee than on Brian. For we (the Clan Colman) have not power to prevent our falling into Brian's hands, if thou come not with me at the head of the battle and the nobles of Leth Chuinn also."

Hugh relented and agreed to take the field against Brian, provided he could prevail on the Cinel Eoghan to follow him; for they were naturally at enmity with the Clan Colman. On being assembled they were told of Malachy's offer to resign the crown if they would join against Brian. Thinking there was little to choose between the Clan Colman and Dal Cas, they answered that this could be nothing but evasion on Malachy's part, as he knew, they said, Hugh would not accept the sovereignty from him; and he did not care, they added, so long as they went with him at the head of the battle to the mutual slaughter of themselves and the Dal Cas [1]—Brian's tribe—for it would be a fight to a finish.

In vain Hugh pressed them to give a favourable answer,—not indeed, from any hope of gaining the sovereignty,—and advised them to retire to secret council and conference, which they did, and the resolution they adopted was that Malachy in

[1] *Idem.*

return for *their* services should cede them half his own territory of Meath. Thereupon Malachy returned home in great wrath, and after consulting the Clan Colman, submitted to the inevitable.

With a retinue of twelve score men he proceeded to Brian's tent and surrendered the sovereignty, when he received, as vassal, a *taurcrec* of twelve score steeds. His retinue felt so mortified that they refused to receive them, so Malachy presented them in token of friendship to Brian's son, Murrough.

After this Brian proceeded northward to bring Ulster into subjection; but Hugh, with the Ultonians, marched out to oppose him, and the rival armies having met at Dundalk "separated" says Teernagh "under a truce, without hostages or pledges."

In 1001 Hugh having invaded Connaught in opposition to Brian, he again proceeded northward with a great army of Irish and Danes and succeeded in inducing Eochy, son of Ardgal, Prince of Ulidia, to acknowledge his sway and give him hostages; but in 1003 Hugh in punishment slew Eochy at the battle of Craebh Tulcha, near Castlereagh, Co. Down, together with his brother Duvtinne; his sons Cuduli and Donal; Garvey, Lord of Iveagh; Gillapatrick, son of Thomas, Lord of Lecale, and many others. On the following day Donal O'Loingsih, Tanist of Ulidia, fell.

Hugh himself fell in the heat of the conflict—some say in the pursuit at Drumbo—in the 29th year of his age and 10th of his reign.[1]

Hugh was succeeded by his nephew, Flaherty, surnamed *an Trostain*, or of the Pilgrim's Staff, son of his brother Murkertac na Midhe. From him Brian, immediately after Hugh's death, attempted again to take the hostages of the northern Hy Nials, and marched through Connaught, but was prevented from advancing further than Trawohely, near Ballysadare, Co. Sligo, by Flaherty, who, in 1007, compelled his ally, the Prince of Ulidia, at Loughbrickland, Co. Down, to give him seven hostages in acknowledgment of his supremacy and in token of his submission.

Submission brought on by a defeat like this was of a very humiliating kind and was made in the following manner, according to Dr. Joyce (*Soc. Hist*): The person submitting lay supine, while his conqueror inserted the point of his sword or spear between his teeth, and held it there so long as it pleased him—sometimes for an hour or more—when he released him from the degrading position. This same ceremony, called "submission by sword" or "submisssion at the spear's point," was sometimes used over five centuries later by the English Deputies of the time of Elizabeth, when they forced Irish chiefs to submit.

[1] *Annals of Ulster; Four Masters.*

In 1010, after many other attempts to reach Ulster, Flaherty, chiefly owing, as it would appear, to a quarrel with the Prince of Tyrconnel, made peace with Brian, and gave him the long sought for hostages, when he acknowledged Flaherty's supremacy in Ulster. With Murrough, son of Brian, Flaherty reduced the Cinel Conal; and proceeding eastwards again took hostages from Nial, son of Duvtinne, Prince of Ulidia, whose fortress of Dun Echdach, supposed to be Duneight, he destroyed.

In some of these expeditions, Hugh, son of Conn, and Murkertac, son of Hugh O'Neill, heirs of Aileach, were slain.

Flaherty did not long remain at peace with Brian; and when messengers arrived, about this time, from the Leinstermen, who had revolted, asking him to make war on Brian's allies, he marched into Meath against Malachy, who some time previously had made an incursion into Ulster, where he burned the fortress of Tullahoge, which appears to have been built by Flaherty, and which remained in occupation of his descendants, for over three centuries. Flaherty remained encamped in Meath for some time without encountering any opposition, except from Brian's high steward, Osli, grandson of Ivor, a Limerick Dane, whom he slew.

Brian, after some time, sent his son Murrough to Malachy's relief, and next year took the field himself against the Leinstermen, who, joined by

the Danes of Dublin, fought the memorable battle of Clontarf, where Brian fell.

After his death, Malachy, supported by Flaherty, regained the throne, though not without opposition from the Leinstermen and Danes, 1000 of whom they took captive, after destroying the Danish fortress of Dublin, and taking the hostages of Leinster, over whom they placed as king, Doncuan, son of Dunlang.

In 1020 they crossed the Shannon and took the hostages of Connaught.

About this time Murkertac, son of Muredach O'Neill, was slain in an encounter with Conor O'Donnellan, Lord of Hy Tuirtre. This Muredach O'Neill was evidently Flaherty's uncle (and grandson of King Donal) to whose descendants the Kingship of Ulster passed after the death of Flaherty's successor, Nial, in 1061.

In 1021 Malachy resigned the kingship and retired to Cro-inis, a crannoge dwelling in Lough Ennell, where, attended by the Archbishop of Armagh and the Abbot of Derry, he breathed his last in the 73rd year of his age.

One of his last acts was to endow a foundation for the support of 300 orphan children to be selected out of the principal cities of the island.

Malachy was the last of the Southern Hy Nial kings; and the same immortalised in Moore's well-known lines:

" Let Erin remember the days of old,
Ere her faithless sons betrayed her,
When Malachy wore the collar of gold,
Which he won from the proud invader."

This was a gold collar taken from the neck of a Danish chief, whom he engaged and slew in single combat.

Malachy who is said to have been the first to introduce the Benedictines, was the founder of many churches and monasteries, as Aubrey De Vere, in imitation of the bards, sings :

" There was none who founded more Convents—none ;
In his palace the old and the poor were fed,
The orphan walked, and the widow's son,
Without groom or page to his throne, or bed.

" In Council he mused with great brows divine,
And eyes like the eyes of the musing kine,
Upholding a sceptre, o'er which was said,
Seven spirits of wisdom like fire-tongues play'd."

From him his descendants took their surname of Ua Maelseachlain, or O'Melaghlin, as it is pronounced and written in English. They had their mortuary chapel at Clonmacnoise, near the Cathedral founded by their ancestor Flan Sinna.

Sir Bernard Burke in his *Vicissitudes*, devotes a chapter to the " fate and fortune " of this once royal family, who were dispossessed of a great part

of their possessions by the English in the 12th century.

Flaherty in the ordinary course of events would have succeeded Malachy, the O'Briens not having recovered from the effects of Clontarf, and the old order of things would have been restored, had it not been that at this period the Hy Nials were so hopelessly divided that for many years Ireland was without a king, neither party feeling strong enough to take the supremacy.

Meanwhile the government of the country, as appears from the *Book of Leinster* and *Annals of Clonmacnoise*, was placed in the hands of two eminent men who acted as regents, Cuan O'Lochain, a layman, the most distinguished poet and scholar of his day—part of his poem on Tara is given in Chapter I.—and Corcran, "the Cleric" of Lismore, "the head of the West of Europe for piety and wisdom," as the *Four Masters* styles him. This, as Dr. Joyce remarks (*Soc. Hist.*), is a striking example of the great respect entertained for men of learning and high character in ancient Ireland.

Flaherty had little hope of succeeding to the monarchy, for even his own clansmen were divided. In 1022-3 Donal, grandson of Murchad Glunillar fell in an affray with the Keenaght of Glengiven; and Lochlain, son of Malachy, son of Malroney, Lord of Inishowen and Magh Itha, was slain in an

engagement with his own brother Nial, aided by the same Keenaght.

This Nial succeeded Flaherty in the sovereignty of Ulster.

In 1026 Flaherty, with Malachy, son of Malroney Prince of Meath, entered Bregia and took the hostages of the Irish from the Danes, after driving them from the island of Inishmot, which they reached on the ice.

In 1027 Donal, son of Flaherty, died; and in 1030 he himself resigned the crown to his son Hugh, surnamed Atlamh, or Atlaman, and went on a pilgrimage to Rome. From England, then ruled by Canute, the Dane, son of Sweyn, King of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, he passed to France, during the reign of Henry I., and his brother, the noted Robert the Devil, and arrived in Rome during the pontificate of John XIX. In the following year he returned, since when he is known in history as Flaherty an Trostain, or Flaherty of the Pilgrim's Staff.

A pilgrimage to Rome in those days was an event of great importance and was attended with much danger, not to speak of discomfort, though the pilgrim was sure of a welcome in many of the great Abbeys and Monasteries, which were possessed by the Irish,—or Scots, as they were called—on the Continent up to a late period.

A lively picture of an Irish pilgrim of later times

is given in the account of Abbot Samson of St. Edmunds who, about the year 1161, undertook a journey to Rome at the time of the schism between Pope Alexander and Octavian. He says: "I passed through Italy at the time when all clerics bearing letters from Pope Alexander were arrested and some of them imprisoned, some hanged and others, after having their noses and lips cut off, sent back to the Pope, to his disgrace and confusion. But I pretended to be a Scot and having adopted the Scottish dress and behaviour I shook my staff like the weapon called a 'gaveloc' at those who scoffed at me, crying aloud in a threatening manner after the manner of the Scots." He then goes on to relate how he was attacked by servants from a certain castle who had laid hold upon him. "And," he adds, "whilst they were searching my clothes, my trousers, my hose, and even my shoes, which I carried on my shoulders after the manner of the Scots, I put my hand into a skin wallet where I carried the papers of my lord the Pope, placed them under a little cup that I had for drinking out of, and by the favour of the lord and St. Edmund, I took them out along with the cup and raising my arms aloft, held them under the cup. They saw the cup indeed, but not the paper, so I escaped out of their hands in the name of the Lord." [1]

[1] *Early Christian Art in Ireland.*

Hugh Atlamh, son of Flaherty, on his accession, led his men against the Cinel Conal, whose chief, Rory O'Cannanan, was slain.

Some months after his father's return he was obliged to march against Eochy, Prince of Ulidia, who in his absence came on a foray into Tyrone, to Tullahogue, where he found preparations had been made to receive him by Hugh, who had passed him by going into Ulidia, from which he took 200 captives and 3000 cows.

Hugh did not long survive this achievement, for in 1033 he died—Prince of Aileach and Roydamna of Ireland—on the night of St. Andrew's festival.

After his death Flaherty again took the lead; but three years later he died "after penance" in the 61st year of his age. Flaherty appears to have been reckoned a good and just king; for it was in his reign that those very good bargains, according to the *Four Masters*, were got at Armagh:

"A sessedach (measure) of oaten grain
Or a third of a measure of black-red sloes,
Or of the acorns of the brown oak,
Or of the nuts of the fair hazel hedge,
Was got without stiff bargaining,
At Ard Macha for one penny."

It was the belief of the ancient Irish that when

[1] Teernagh's *Annals.*

a good and just king ruled—one who faithfully observed in his government, the royal customs and wise precepts followed by his ancestors—the whole country was prosperous, as in the reign of Feredach the Just (Chapter I.). The seasons were mild, crops were plentiful, cattle were fruitful, the water abounded with fish, and the fruit trees had to be propped up owing to the weight of their produce. Under bad kings, as in the reign of Carbery Cat Head, it was the reverse.

The ode which the chief bard is said to have chanted at the inauguration of the king, and which took care to remind him of this, is thus translated by Dr. Hyde :

"Seven witnesses there be
Of the broken faith of Kings,
First to trample on the free,
Next to sully sacred things.
Next to strain the law divine
(This defeat in battle brings)
Famine, slaughter, milkless kine.
And disease on flying wings,
These the seven-fold vivid lights,
That light the perjury of Kings."

This belief is referred to everywhere in Irish literature, and even found its way into Christianity.

In an ancient Canon attributed to St. Patrick, among other blessings attending the reign of a just king, are enumerated: "fine weather, calm

seas, crops abundant and trees laden with fruit." The belief in the beneficent influence of a just king also prevailed among the Greeks and Romans.

Hugh, the son and heir of Flaherty, left two sons, who appear to have been very young at this time. They were : Donal ; and Hugh, whose descendants—the M'Sweeneys—settled in Tir Conal, Connaught, and Munster. In Tir Conal there were three different Septs, namely, the M'Sweeneys of Fanad, west of Lough Swilly, who founded the convent of Rathmullen ; the M'Sweeneys, styled na dTuatha or na Doe, *i.e.*, of the districts, marked on Norden's Map west of Fanad, in the present barony of Kilmacrenan, Co. Donegal ; and the M'Sweeneys of Bannagh, now a barony in the south-west of Donegal. They had a castle at Rahan, overlooking "M'Swynes Bay" which is separated from Donegal Bay by St. John's point. The M'Sweeneys were great leaders of Galloglasses or battle-axe men, and so they are often represented in coats of mail with broad battle-axes in their hands.—See Joyce's *Soc. Hist.*, vol. i. p. 121, and O'Hart's *Pedigrees.*

Donal, the eldest son of Hugh Atlamh, and grandson of Flaherty, evidently died a young man, when the Princedom of Aileach and of Ulster passed for a time from his descendants.

Donal, surnamed in the pedigrees Oge Damh, *i.e.*, the Young Man of Learning, left a son Flaherty,

who was father of Conor of the Wood, whose son Tiege of the Glen was father of Murkertac of Moylinny, whom we shall meet with later on.

These princes, styled Roydamna or heirs of Aileach and Ulster, held the Lordship of Tealach Oge, which, as mentioned in the extract from the *Book of Rights*, was one of the free chieftainships of Aileach.

The Chieftainships of Magh Itha and Inishowen were at the same time held by the descendants of Donal, brother of Nial Glunduff; and Nial, great-son of Flan, son of Donal, who, as recorded in 1023, defeated his brother Lochlain, now succeeded Flaherty.

NOTES.

(*a*) See Chapter VI., Part II., for this ceremony.

(*b*) Lis Luigheach, *i.e.*, Lewysfort. This Lewy was father of Corc, King of Munster, according to Dr. Todd (see Chapter II.). According to O'Curry (*Lectures*) Lewy was a DeDanann King, who gave his name (Lis Luigheach) to Tara, Naas, and other places, and Tara is the Lis referred to. An ancestor of Brian was surnamed Tal or M'Tail—son of the adze—because his foster-father was a carpenter—O'Curry's *Lectures*.

(*c*) Olnegmacht, the ancient name of Connaught.

(*d*) Corc's Brugh or Fort now Cashel.

(*e*) Lorc, *i.e.*, Leary Lorc or the fierce, son of Ugaine More, ancestor of the Leinstermen, whose territory is thus referred to—Lorc.

CHAPTER XII.

DONAL O'NEILL, GRANDSON OF LOCHLAIN, KING OF IRELAND.

HERE is little of interest or importance recorded of Nial, who in 1044 made an expedition to Omeith and Cualigne in Arghialla, or Oriel, to revenge the profanation of the Clog-an-Eodhachta, or Bell of St. Patrick's Will,[1] which, as will be remembered, was given to the Cinel Eoghan by St. Cairnech.

It is now to be seen, enclosed in a beautiful and costly shrine, in the Dublin Museum. It was held in great veneration by the Cinel Eoghan, and was preserved by a tribe of hereditary keepers under the protection of the Princes of Aileach, who were bound to avenge any insult to its sanctity. It was made for St. Patrick by Mac Cecht, one of his three smiths; and is described by Dr. Reeves (Trans. R.I.A. vol. 27) as being quadrilateral and formed of two plates bent over so as to meet, and fastened together by large-headed iron rivets.

[1] *Four Masters.* In future when no authority is given for events it is to be understood that they are taken either from the *Annals of Ulster* or *Four Masters*, or both. The latter was compiled chiefly from the *Annals of Ulster.*

The corners are rounded by the gentle inclination of the parts which join. One of the plates constitutes the face, the crown and upper third of the back, as well as the adjacent portions of each side. Subsequently to the securing of the joints by rivets the iron frame was consolidated by the fusion of bronze into the joints and over the surface, giving the whole a metallic solidity which much enhanced its resonance as well as contributed to its preservation.

The handle and clapper, of iron, is of later construction. When struck by this it has a dull and solemn sound.

In 1045 Murkertac O'Neill, son of Flaherty an Trostain, in punishment for the violation of another oath sworn on this bell, led his men against the men of Mughdorna—a name still preserved in the barony of Cremourne, Co. Monaghan—many of whom he took captive.

In this century, a branch of the M'Mahons, Chiefs of Mughdorna, or Crioch Mughdorna (*i.e.*, the country of the descendants of the Mughdorna, son of Colla Mean) settled in Ulidia in the now Co. Down, and gave their tribe-name to the district included in the present barony of Mourne, or Mughdorna.[1]

In 1046 Murkertac, the Lord of Tullahoge and Tanist to Nial, was slain on a foray with many of his men at Casan Linne, near Castlebellingham, Co.

[1] Joyce's *Irish Names.*

Louth, by Garvey, Lord of Bregia. In the succeeding year his brother Muredach, with Atteidh, Lord of Iveagh, was burned to death in a house fired by Culadh, Lord of Uachtar-tire, now Watertiry, Co. Down.

After Murkertac's death his cousin Ardgal, son of Lochlain O'Neill, was elected Tanist and installed in the lordship of Tullahogue, from which for some reason he was expelled in 1051, when his kinsman Hugh, grandson of Fergal, son of Conaing, son of Nial Glunduff, took his place. He died three years later, when Murkertac O'Neill, brother apparently of Donal Oge Damh, and son of Hugh Atlaman, succeeded.

In 1061 his cousin Ardghal was inaugurated Prince of Aileach and Ulster on the death of Nial. This Prince, according to the *Saltair Na Rann*, a 12th century MS. (Gilbert's *Nat. MSS.*); and O'Donovan (*Miscellany of the Celtic Society*) was the son of Lochlain O'Neill, grandson of Muredach and great grandson of King Donal O'Neill of Armagh, and his father Lochlain and Flaherty an Trostan O'Neill were first cousins.(*a*).

Ardgall, immediately on his accession, prepared to assert his right to the High-kingship, which a few years after the death of Malachy was claimed by Donogh, son of Brian Boru, who, however, never attempted to reduce Ulster.

Ardgal first compelled the Connacians to ac-

knowledge his sway after taking 1000 captives and 6000 cows; and levying great tribute from Glen Swilly westwards to the western parts of Luighne or Leyeny, and to the river Moy in Tir-Awley, Co. Mayo, where he received the submission of the princes of Connaught and Hugh O'Conor; Hugh, grandson of Nial O'Rorke of Breffny; the son of Art O'Rorke, and others. It now only remained to take the hostages and receive the submission of the Princes of Meath, which would give him the supremacy; but before he could achieve this, he was afflicted with illness in the second year of his reign; and died in 1064 at Tullahoge; and was buried in Armagh with great honour in the mausoleum, or cemetery of the kings. In the same year his cousin and Tanist, Murkertac O'Neill, died; and the O'Neills being now minors the chieftainship passed to a younger branch in the person of Hugh, grandson of Ualgharg, a descendant of Nial Calle.

He, however, resigned the chieftainship to Donal, son of Nial, Ardgal's predecessor, and died in 1067 steward or lord of Clan Dubhinreacht (*b*) in the present barony of Clogher, Co. Tyrone.

Donal, Hugh's successor in the Princedom of Aileach and of Ulster, like his ancestor, Nial the Showery, was remarkable for his piety and charity, so that he was called Donal na m-Bocht, or Donal of the Poor. Teernagh, the Annalist,

Abbot of Clonmacnoise, who died in 1088, says that he was the devoutest man in Ireland in his day. He was killed at the battle of Sithbhe, now Sivey, Co. Tyrone, in 1068, in endeavouring to suppress a rebellion of his subjects led by his brother and successor Hugh.

In the same year and probably in the same battle his kinsman Flaherty—Lord of Tullahoge—grandson of Fergal, son of Conaing, son of Nial Glunduff, was mortally wounded. He was succeeded by Conor O'Brien, grandson of King Brian Boru.

Only two of Brian's sons left issue, according to O'Curry (*Lectures*), namely, Tiege, and Donogh, who died in Rome. (*c*). Conor, who was apparently a son of the latter, was driven from Munster by Tirlo, son of Tiege, when he took refuge in Ulster with the Cinel Eoghan, by whom he was honourably received, and now installed in the Lordship of Tullahoge, a distinction only conferred on members of the royal family, or royal heirs of Aileach.

The adoption of strangers into the family or clan was common; but according to the Brehon Laws, it required the consent of the *Fine*, or circle of near relatives, formally given. The adopted person, called a "son of protection," had not the full rights of the ordinary members of the family, especially as regarded land. Sometimes not only individuals, but smaller tribes who for any reason migrated from their original home, were adopted.

The above Conor, Lord of Tullahoge, and "heir of Ireland" died in 1078, when, according to the *Annals of Inisfallen*, his brother Kennedy was installed in his place.

He had a daughter Bevyn married to Donal, son of Ardghal, who in 1083 gained the chieftainship of Aileach and Ulster after the death of Hugh, son of Nial, son of Malachy.

Donal, like his father, on succeeding, at once prepared to contest the sovereignty with Tirlo, son of Tiege O'Brien, who in attempting to reduce Ulster in 1075 was defeated by the Ultonians at Ardee in Arghialla, in the now Co. Louth, and compelled to beat a hasty retreat.

Against this Tirlo and his son and Tanist Murkertac or Murta, Donal took the field; and in 1086, marching southwards and forcing Rory O'Conor, King of Connaught, to join him, he entered Munster and razed Kincora, the palace built by Brian Boru, which stood on the summit of the hill opposite the bridge of Killaloe:

"Where, Oh Kincora, is Brian the Great?
And where is the beauty that once was thine,
Oh where are the princes and nobles that sate,
At the feasts in thy halls and drank the red wine,
Where, Oh Kincora?"

Crossing the Shannon Donal burned Limerick and wasted the adjoining plain as far as Emly,

Lough Gur and Bruree, till O'Brien made his submission and gave eight score champions, both Irish and Danes, as pledges and hostages.

Four years later he was acknowledged Lord Paramount at a great royal meeting held on the shore of Lough Neagh, where he received the submission and hostages of Murta O'Brien, the now King of Munster, Donal O'Melaghlin, King of Meath; Rory O'Conor, King of Connaught, and other princes.

About this time he enshrined that cherished possession of the Cinel Eoghan—the Bell of St. Patrick's Testament—in a case of gold and silver of exquisite workmanship. The Bell and Shrine are now to be seen in the National Museum, with an inscription on the latter asking for a prayer for Donal, King of Ireland, the Archbishop of Armagh; its keeper, O'Mulholland, and its artificer.

The front of the shrine, an illustration of which forms the frontispiece to Joyce's *Soc. Hist.*, is adorned with silver and gilt plates and knot-work in golden filigree. The silver work is partly covered with scrolls, some in alto-relievo and some in bas-relief. It is also decorated with gems and crystals, and on the sides are animal forms elongated and twisted into interlaced scrolls.[1]

The O'Mulhollands were its hereditary keepers, and in consideration of their high office, they had

[1] *Early Christian Art*, by Miss Stokes.

allotted them many townlands in Loughinsholin in the south of the now Co. Derry, and including doubtless "Mulhollandstown." It remained in their possession till the death of its last keeper in the direct line, Henry Mulholland of Edenduffcarrick, who, when dying, bequeathed it to a gentleman of Belfast, from whom it passed into the possession of Rev. Dr. Todd of Trinity College.

This Bell, with the Misach Cairnech, mentioned in the reign of Murkertac M'Erc, is classed among the Cathachs or Battlers of Ireland, because it was carried into battle by the Cinel Eoghan, and was supposed to conduce to victory, like the Ark of the Covenant, or the Crozier of St. Fillan, which was borne before the Scots on the field of Bannockburn.

From O'Donnell's *Life of St. Columba* we learn that these battlers were carried into battle "hung on the breast of an hereditary lay successor of a priest without mortal sin (so far as he could help)."

There were many other Saints' bells preserved in the territory, as the Bell of St. Columba, kept by the M'Guirks of Termonmaguirk, and called the "Bell of God's Vengeance"; the Bell of St Baedan; the Bell of Drumragh, near Omagh, whose guardians were the M'Enhills; and the Bell of St. Mura, which was enshrined in the 9th century; and was preserved in Fahan until the year 1849 when its last possessor, a poor fisherman, of Inishowen, sold it for £6 to Mr. John MacLelland of

Dungannon, who contributed a paper on the subject, accompanied by lithographs, to the *Ulster Journal*, Vol. I. In 1856 it was sold at Christie's in London to Lord Lanesborough for £72, and after his death it was purchased, for sale, by Spitzer of Paris.[1]

This, and the Finn Faidhach, or Fair-sounding Bell of St. Patrick, enshrined by Donal, were the most treasured and celebrated of all the Cinel Eoghan bells. The latter plays an important part in many of the Patrician narrations, both legendary and authentic. A legend concerning the former is given in the reign of Hugh Allan I.

Donal reigned in peace till 1094, when O'Brien raised the standard of revolt, and began that struggle for supremacy which lasted for twenty years. Donal marching from the north encountered O'Brien with the Momonians and Lagenians at Oughterard near Clane, in Kildare. They fled on his approach, when, not wishing to plunder Leinster, he returned home, after burning the town.

Three years later they again met at Conalli in Co. Louth, but were separated by the Archbishop of Armagh who in 1099 arranged for a year's peace. However the Ulidians, allies of O'Brien, were still in arms, and against them—who were encamped at Craebh Tulcha, near Castlereagh—Donal led his men across Tuaime, now Toome, between Loughs Neagh

[1] *Inishowen and Tyrconnell.*

and Beg. His cavalry, dashing ahead, inflicted a crushing defeat on the cavalry of the Ulidians, who thereupon abandoned their camp, which was burned, the sacred trees under which their chiefs were inaugurated being at the same time uprooted.

The Ulidians never took kindly to the rule of the Princes of Aileach, whose bitterest enemies they proved in this and the next century under their Princes of the Dal Fiatach tribe, who took their surname—Mac Dunlevy—from Donlevy (Donsliebhe) Prince of Ulidia, who was slain on a foray in Tyrone in 1094 at Bealach-guirt-an-iubhar, *i.e.*, the Road or Pass of the Field of the Yew, in the present Co. Derry.

This chief was grandson of Eochy or Eochaidh, Prince of Ulidia, for which reason he is called Donlevy O'hEochaidha, or O'Haughy, *i.e.*, Donlevy, grandson of Eochy. O'Hart brings the pedigree of the family down to 1176.

Donogh, brother of Donlevy, taken prisoner after the above battle, was deposed and confined in the prison of Aileach by Donal, who received from the Ulidians themselves pledges and hostages, one of whom was the successor of Comgall, or Abbot of Bangor, hence the lines:

"Taken were the pledges of the Ulidians by force—
Witnesses tell it accurately—
By Donal with the fury of a lion,
And by generous Siol Eoghan.

"Two strong hostages were given,
Of the heroes of the Ulidians formerly,
The third, without falsehood, was the Abbot of Comgal,
To the royal power of Donal O'Neill."

O'Brien, who was now at the head of an immense army, made desperate efforts to reach Aileach and revenge the destruction of Kincora. In 1100 he was defeated at Ballyshannon, though supported by the Danes, who on landing at Derry were all cut off by Donal. However he was obliged to give way in the following year, when O'Brien, marching through Cinel Conal and supported by another Norse fleet under Magnus, King of Norway, succeeded in reaching Inishowen and demolishing Aileach, "and," says the *Annals of Clonmacnoise*, "he broke down the stone house that was in Aileach," and released Donal's prisoners and hostages. In every sack used to carry provisions for the army he ordered his men to place a stone of the palace, and so a Munster bard says:

"I never heard of the billeting of grit stones
Though I heard of the billeting of companies,
Until the stones of Aileach were billeted,
On the horses of the King of the West."

With these he afterwards built a parapet upon the top of his fort in Limerick, the site of which is now occupied by the Cathedral.

St. Columba is said to have prophesied the

THE GREENAN OF AILEACH.

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destruction of Aileach "after which," according to another "prophecy" in the *Dialogue of the Two Sages* "the sea would come over Erin seven years before the Day of Judgment."[1]

The remains of Aileach are comparatively well preserved, thanks to the efforts of the late Dr. Bernard of Derry, who became interested in the fortress on seeing an article about it in the *Irish Times* some twenty-eight years ago, and who deserves the thanks of everyone interested in the preservation of our ancient monuments.

Mr. O'Neill Russell is enthusiastic about the view from the hill. In his article on Aileach in the *Beauties of Ireland* he says "there is a view from the hill-top on which it is situated that for wildness and sublimity can hardly be equalled anywhere in the British Isles,—a view which will amply repay anyone who sees it on a clear day. On the north the hills of Inishowen obstruct the view, but west and south-west it is sublime. The eye ranges over a wilderness of fantastic shaped mountains, some shooting up sharp as arrows, others round and ridgy, separated by sinuous sea-lochs and glittering tarns,—a land of awful ruggedness and desolation,—of rock-bound shores cleft into myriad bays and fiords by the thundering almost ever restless northern sea that beats against them." If no hoary ruin crowned the hill on which "Lordly

[1] O'Curry's *Lectures*.

Aileach" of Gaelic poets stands, the view from its summit would be worth a journey of a hundred miles to see, for most of the wildness and grandeur of "Dark Donegal," are spread before the eye. On the north-east and north-west the waters of Loch Foyle and Loch Swilly spread themselves almost beneath the feet of the gazer from Aileach.

"Royal Greenan of Aileach, the pride of past ages,
You stand as the Tara of old Inisowen,
Whose moss-covered ruins in history's pages,
Yet sparkle still new with a lustre their own."

Inis Eanaigh, or Inchenny, in the parish of Urney, near Strabane, was now the chief fortress of the princes of Cinel Eoghan.[1] Aileach, according to a poem quoted by O'Curry (*Manners and Customs*) having been deserted after the death of Murkertac of the Leather Cloaks.

Judging from the name of this fortress—the island or river-holm of the marsh—which is first mentioned in 963, in the reign of King Donal O'Neill I., for whom it appears to have been built—it was evidently a sort of Crannoge, one of those "delightfully situated" residences described by Giraldus. and which continued in use down to the 16th century.

Writing to the government in answer to an inquiry as to what castles or forts O'Neill hath,

[1] Colby's *Survey of Londonderry.*

one Thomas Phettiplace, in a letter[1] dated May 15th, 1567, says: "For castles I think it be not unknown to your honours he trusteth no point thereunto for his safety as appeareth by the razing of the strongest castles of all his countreys; and that fortification which he only dependeth upon is in certain fresh-water loghes (Loughs) in his country which from the sea there come neither ship nor boat to approach them.

It is thought that there in the said fortified islands lyeth all his plate, which is much, and money prisoners and gages, which islands had in war tofore been attempted, and now of late again by the Lord Deputy there which for want of means of safe conducts upon the water it hath not prevailed."

O'Brien after plundering Inishowen and destroying Fahan and Ardstraw marched eastwards to Ulidia, where he set up Donogh O'Eochy, who had been deposed by Donal. Donal after expelling O'Canannan, the Prince of Tyrconnell, whom he suspected of aiding O'Brien, marched against him. O'Brien marched from Munster to his relief and encamped at Moycava, in which is situated Donoghmore beyond Newry, in Iveagh. Donal had his camp at Clan Brassil, near Armagh, where for several days the two armies faced each other, neither side venturing to take the offensive. At

[1] Cited in Lubbock's *Prehistoric Times*.

last O'Brien retired to his camp, apparently to await the arrival of his ally, Magnus, King of Norway, to whose son, Sigurd, he had given his daughter in marriage.

In the meantime, leaving the Leinstermen, Danes, and a detachment of the Munstermen to guard his camp, he applied himself to pillaging Dal Araidhe, the chief of which—O'Loingsigh or Lynch—was a supporter of Donal, who thereupon attacked O'Brien's camp and routed his men with prodigious slaughter, Murkertac, King of Leinster, with his chiefs, Gillapatrick Roe, Prince of Ossory; O'Ryan, Prince of Idrone, and Malmorey, Prince of Hy Kinsellagh; Paul, son of Amand, and Torstan, son of Eric, two Danish Chiefs, with the O'Brics of the Deisi, and many others, being among the slain.

O'Brien made the best of his way to Munster, Donal returning in triumph to his camp with his pavilion, standard, and jewels and "much wealth." O'Brien never recovered from the effects of this blow, which lost him the support of his staunchest allies —and his rival's most troublesome enemies—the Ulidians, from whom Donal took pledges and hostages at Moycava, where, soon after, Magnus, King of Norway, was defeated and slain (*d*).

In the following year the Archbishop of Armagh, while arranging a peace between the rivals, was taken ill in Dublin, where he died. His successor,

Ceallach, was more fortunate in 1109, gaining a year's respite.

In 1111 a party of the Ulidians raided Tyrone and up-rooted the trees at Tullahoge under which the princes of Aileach were inaugurated. Tullahoge, Tulach Og, or Tealach Oge, was one of the free chieftainships of Aileach and here "the sovereignty over the men of Eire" was assumed, as observed. So the *Book of Rights* says:

"There is not due from Tulach Og,
A tribute to the King of Feabhal of the Banquets,
Because in its proud land is assumed,
The sovereignty over the men of Eire."

In this place, the princes of Aileach of the line of Hugh Atlaman, son of Flaherty of the Pilgrim's Staff, had their principal fortress. It appears to have been built by Flaherty early in the 11th century, and continued in use down to a late period.

To avenge the above Donal's son and heir Nial made a foray into Ulidia, whence he took 3000 cows. Donogh, Prince of Ulidia, afterwards came in and having of his own choice given pledges and hostages a plenary peace was made; but Donogh was a turbulent chief and not at all popular with his clansmen, at whose request apparently, he was banished by Donal, who gave the chieftainship to his nephews, the sons of Donlevy, and Eochy O'Mahon, or grandson of Mahon.

O'Brien attempted to reinstate Donogh, who was blinded by the Ulidians themselves. This was a common form of punishment in those days, both in England and Ireland. Thus, Henry II., in his excursion into Wales in 1164, having received the children of the noblest families of that country as hostages, gave orders that the eyes of all the males should be rooted out, and the ears and noses of the females amputated.—See Lingard's *History of England*, c. 13. In Ireland the blinding was performed by inserting a needle.

About this time, Donal, in punishment for their supporting O'Brien, invaded the Connacians, 1000 of whom he took captive. O'Brien was now compelled to give up the struggle, having fallen into a decline; and in 1114 he retired to the monastery of Lismore, where he died five years later. With him passed away for ever the great power of the O'Briens. From his second son Mahon sprang the M'Mahons of Co. Clare, now represented by the Dukes of Magenta — See Burke's *Peerage* and *Memoirs of the O'Briens* by John O'Donohoe, M.A.

After O'Brien's retirement in 1114, Donal received the submission of his adherents. At Rath Kenna Hugh O'Rorke of Breffny and O'Melaghlin of Meath gave hostages. Crossing the Shannon at the ford of Athlone, into Connaught, he received the hostages of Tirlo O'Conor at Dunlo near Ballinasloe, where he was joined by Nial, his heir,

with the Cinel Conal. He then proceeded to Tulloch O'Dea in Co. Clare, where peace was made with the Munstermen, and thus he was left without a rival during the rest of his reign.

In 1010 his Queen, Bevyn, daughter of Kennedy O'Brien, died; and in 1114 his brother Murkertac was laid to rest.

In 1119 his heir apparent, Nial, "the paragon of Ireland for personal form, sense, and hospitality" was slain in quelling a revolt of the Cinel Main, headed by O'Gormly, the most powerful of the sub-chiefs of Cinel Eoghan at this time.

O'Gormly, who ruled the territories of Magh Itha, Cinel Main and Cinel Enda, all in the present Barony of Raphoe—save the latter, which included part of Inishowen—took his surname from Gairmleadh, or Gormly, the 16th in descent from Main (*a quo* Cinel Main) son of Muredach, son of Eoghan. The O'Looneys, who were of the same descent, were sometimes chiefs of Cinel Main, but after 1178 they were driven into the wild district of Muntir Looney in the north of the present Co. Tyrone.[1]

The O'Gormlys were no small trouble in this century to Donal and his successors in the chieftainship of Aileach.

In 1121 he resigned the crown and retired to the monastery of St. Columba in Derry, where he

[1] O'Donovan's *Four Masters*.

died in the same year in the 73rd year of his age and 38th of his reign, according to the *Annals of Ulster*: "A.D. 1121, Domnall, son of Ardghar, son of Lochlan, Arch-king of Ireland, the most distinguished of the Gaedhal for form and for birth, for sense and for prowess, for happiness and prosperity, for bestowal of treasure and of food, died in Doire of Columcille in the 38th year of his reign and 73rd of his age and on the night of Wednesday and on the 4th (*recte* 5th) of the Ides of February."

Donal's son-in-law, Tirlo O'Conor, King of Connaught, is by some reckoned his successor in the sovereignty. He was married to his daughter, Dervorgill, who died in 1022.

In Ulster his son Conor succeeded.

NOTES

(*a*) O'Donovan and the *Saltair* we take to be the best authorities for Ardgal's pedigree, about which there seems to be some uncertainty. O'Flaherty has him nephew of Nial and son of Lochlain the Lord of Inishowen (sl. 1023) whose pedigree we have traced in the last Chapter from Donal, brother of Nial Glunduff. Teernagh, who wrote in Ardgal's time, calls him Ardgal Mac Lochlain Ua Neill, or Ardgal son of Lochlain O'Neill. His son Donal, in the poem from the *Annals of Ulster* given above, is also called Donal O'Neill, which goes to show he was a descendant of Nial Glunduff.

(*b*) Clan Dubhinreacht. This Dubhinreacht was a descendant of Ualgharg, son of Flaherty, son of Nial Calle. whose death is recorded in 876. In 1095 the Annalists record the death of Gillachiaran Mac Ualgharg, or Mac Goldrick, Lord of Hy Dubhinreacht in the present Barony of Clogher in Tyrone.

(*c*) Donogh, who was defeated by his nephew Tirlo in 1063, died the following year in Rome. His wife Driella was a daughter of Earl Godwin and sister of Harold the "Last of the Saxon Kings"—who was slain at Hastings by William the Conqueror —and of Editha Queen of Edward the Confessor.

(*d*) See M'Gee's *History of Ireland.* In some Histories of Ireland Magnus is represented as invading Ulster as the enemy rather than the ally of Murkertac, who in the *Historia Magni Nudipedis*, quoted by Prendergast (p. lxiv.), in Haliday's *Scandinavian Kingdom*, is called "Miarkartan" King of Connaught. With his aid he took Dublin from Donal's ally, Godfrey. There is good reason to think that O'Brien also invited to his assistance William the Conqueror and his son William Rufus who, it is well known, contemplated invading Ireland. Murkertac was well known in England.

CHAPTER XIII.

MURKERTAC, GRANDSON OF DONAL, THE LAST HY NIALL KING OF IRELAND SL. 1166.

URKERTAC, son of Nial, and grandson of Donal, succeeded Conor, who was treacherously slain by the men of Magh Itha in 1136. In punishment Mahon O'Dubhda, or O'Duddy, chief of Clan Laverty, with the chief men of his territory, were put to death by Murkertac, who, in 1142, was severely wounded in suppressing a rising in the same neighbourhood led by the Fir Droma, or O'Donnellys, who at this time were seated at Drum Lighean, or Drumleen, near Lifford as stated.

These disturbances were fomented by O'Gormly (Donal), the overlord of the district. Joined by some other malcontents in the northern part of the territory, and the Ulidians, he defeated Murkertac in the same year, and usurped the chieftainship. But Murkertac, with his cousin Murkertac O'Neill and the men of Tullahoge and Cinel Conal, vanquished O'Gormly, whom he banished to Connaught in 1144. He next marched against the Ulidians, who were encamped at Aghdearg near Loughbrickland.

On his approach they abandoned their camp but were pursued to Dundrum in Lecale, where they made a stand and were defeated with great loss, Archu, Lord of Lecale, whose territory was burned, being left on the field.

After this, Culadh, grandson of Donlevy, made his submission, but he was deposed, when the territory was divided between four other chiefs. O'Carrol (Donogh), and Teernan O'Rorke of Breffny endeavoured to reinstate him, but without success. Afterwards, in 1148, O'Carrol, the Prince of Oriel, with the chiefs of Ulidia, at a convention held at Armagh, promised Murkertac obedience, and a solemn league of concord was entered into which was ratified under the Staff of Jesus and in presence of Gelasius, Archbishop of Armagh, and the clergy.

On peace being restored in Ulster he proceeded to make good his claim to the sovereignty of the island in opposition to Tirlo O'Conor, who, however, soon acknowledged his right.

With the cavalry of Aileach he made a royal journey to Dublin in 1149, where he received the submission of the Danes and the famous King of Leinster, Dermod M'Murrough. Soon after he made another "royal journey" to Inismoe in Meath, where O'Conor brought his pledges and hostages, "without a hosting through the blessing of Patrick and his successor."

He next divided Meath into three parts between

O'Carrol of Oriel, O'Rorke of Breffny, and O'Conor of Connaught, and banished Murchad O'Melaghlin on some provocation. This was only a temporary arrangement, however, for two years later he recalled Murchad, and gave West Meath to him and East Meath to his son Malachy. At the same time he deposed O'Carrol in consequence of some disrespect he had shown Gilla Mac Liag, (*a*) or Gelasius, Archbishop of Armagh, who in the previous year made his visitation of Cinel Eoghan, when he received his "full tribute," namely, a cow from every householder—biatach and freeman —a horse from every chief, and 20 cows from the king himself. This would amount to a considerable sum at the present time, allowing £13 for a cow and at least four times that for a good horse.

These circuits or *cuarts*, as they were called, were the forerunners of the ecclesiastical visitations of the Archbishops and Bishops of later times. In addition to this tribute the Brehon Laws tell us the Church was entitled to : 1, Tithes ; 2, First fruits, *i.e.*, the first of the gathering of every new produce, and every first calf and every first lamb that is brought forth in the year ; 3, Firstlings, *i.e.*, the first son born after marriage (who accordingly was to enter religion) ; and the first-born male of all milk-giving animals.

About this time Murkertac, accompanied by Tirlo O'Connor and Dermot M'Murrough marched

into Breffny (*b*) now part of the present Co. Longford and Co. Leitrim—and deposed Teernan O'Rorke, who appears to have revolted from the king of Connaught—O'Conor—who at Dangan, in Roscommon, received the pledges and hostages of Teernan's successor, Gillabride O'Rorke.

On this occasion it was that Teernan was deserted by his faithless spouse Dervorgill, whose *liaison* with the King of Leinster is popularly believed to have brought about the Anglo-Norman invasion. Moore reminds us of this in his *Song of O'Rorke*:

There was a time, falsest of women!
When Breffney's good sword would have sought
That man, through a million of foemen,
Who dar'd but to doubt thee in thought,
While now—Oh! degenerate daughter,
Of Erin! how fallen thy fame!
And through ages of bondage and slaughter,
Thy country shall bleed for thy shame.

Dervorgill was a daughter of the above-mentioned Murchad O'Melaghlin, who founded the celebrated Cistercian Abbey of Bective, near Trim, 1146-8.

Many, or most of the great abbeys, the ruins of which to this day attest the power and zeal of their founder, as Wakeman says, date their existence from the reign of Murkertac, who, in 1153, as appears from a list of Cistercian Abbeys given in the Appendix to Grace's *Annals*, founded and richly endowed the great Cistercian Abbey

of Newry, between the territories of Iveagh and Orior, the former in Ulidia, the latter in Oriel. The chiefs and princes of these territories and Principalities are consequently mentioned in the charter, taken from Dr. O'Conor's *Rerum Hibernicarum Scriptores, 2 Prolegomena ad Annales*, p. 158, and translated by O'Donovan.

CHARTER OF THE ABBEY OF NEWRY.

"MAURICE MCLOUGHLIN, King of all Ireland, to all his Princes, Nobles, Leaders, Clergy and Laity, and to all and each the Irish present and to come, Greeting.

"Know ye that I, by the unanimous will and consent of the nobles of Ultonia (Ulidia) Ergallia (Oriel) and O'Neach (Iveagh), to wit, of Donnchad O'Carroll, King of all Ergallia, and Murchad his son, King of O'Meith, and of the territory of Erther (*c*); of Conla, King of Ultonia; of Donal O'Heda, King of O'Neach have granted and confirmed in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Patrick and St. Benedict, the Father and Founder of the Cistercian Order, to the monks serving God in Nyvorcintracta (Newry), as a perpetual and pure donation, the land of O'Cormac whereon was founded the Monastery of Athcrathin, with its lands woods and waters; Crumglean, with its lands woods and waters; Lisinelle with its lands woods and waters; Caselangan with its lands woods and

waters; Croa Drumfornasht with its lands woods and waters; Leitri; Corcradh; Fidglassayn; Tirmorgonnean, Conocul, etc. These lands with their mills I have confirmed to the aforesaid Monks of my own proper gifts for the health of my soul, that I may be partaker of all the benefits masses, hours (*i.e.*, vespers and matins) and prayers that shall be offered in the Monastery itself and to the end of time.

"And because I have founded the monastery of Nyvorcintracta of my own mere will, I have taken the monks so much under my protection, as sons and domestics of the faith, that they may be safe from the molestations and incursions of all men.

"I WILL also that, as the kings and nobles of Oneach or of Ergallia may wish to confer certain lands upon this monastery for the health of their souls, they may do so in my lifetime, while they may have my free will and licence, that I may know what and how much of my earthly kingdom, the King of Heaven may possess for the use of his poor monks.

"WITNESSES AND SURETIES.

Gilla M'Liag, Archbishop of Armagh, holding the Staff of Jesus in his hand,
Hugh O'Killedy, Bishop of Ergallia (Oriel),
Muredach O'Coffey, Bishop of Tirone,
Maelissa Mac Clerig-cuir, Bishop of Ultonia (Ulidia),
Gilla Comada O'Carroll, Bishop of Tirconnell,

Eochmacarch O'Kane, (*d*) King of Firnacreeve and Ciannachta,
O'Cairredh the Great, (*e*) Chief of Clans Ængus and Neill,
Cumaigh O'Flann, (*f*) King of O'Turtray (Ui Tuirtre),
Gillachreest O'Dubhdara, King of Fermanagh,
Echmacarch O'Foyflainn.
Maelmocta Mac O'Nebla,
Hugh, the Great Magennis, (*g*) Chief of Clan Hugh in in Oneach Uladh,
Dermot MaCartan, (*h*) Chief of Kinelfagarty,
Acholy Mac Conlacha,
Gilla-na-naemh O'Lowry, Chief of Kinel Temnean,
Gilla Odar O'Casey, Abbot of Dun-da-leth-ghlas (Down-patrick)
Hugh Mac Glanna, Abbot of Iniscourcey,
Angan, Abbot of Dromoge (? Dromore), and many other Clerics and Laics."

The interest of this curious document, O'Donovan says, will be appreciated from the fact of its being the only Monastic Charter, previous to the arrival of the English, hitherto discovered, and for the corroboration it affords of the fidelity of our early annals and genealogical histories, with all which he carefully compared it.

This monastery, called in Irish, *Iubar Cinntracta* and in Latin *Monasterium de Virdi ligno*, or the Monastery of the Yew Tree, got its name from two large yew trees which grew within the precincts of the Monastery, and one of which is said to have been planted by St. Patrick. In old English documents

it is called "The Newries," Harris in his *History of Down*, written in 1774, says "it is still fresh in the memories of some ancient inhabitants of the town, that in the year 1688, certain English soldiers in burying their dead, discovered in the south-east quarter of the abbey, the stumps of some trees of fine wood, and without regard to the place, rooted up and converted them to several domestic utensils, the wood being red and bearing a fine polish."

"A mitred abbot formerly possessed the lordship of Newry and Mourne, and exercised therein episcopal jurisdiction, which, after the dissolution of the abbey, was done by the temporal proprietor; and at present Robert Needham, Esq., to whom the town and manor belongs. enjoys an exempt Episcopal jurisdiction, within the said manor, and the seal of his court (and arms of the town) is a mitred Abbot in his Albe, sitting in a chair and supported by two yew trees with this inscription: *Sigillum exemptae Jurisdictionis de viridi ligno, alias Newry et Mourne.*"

The last abbot of this monastery was John Prole. In the reign of Edward VI. it was granted to Sir Nicholas Bagenal. The lands are now held by Lord Kilmorey.

O'Donovan took the date of the charter to be 1160, but as appears from the above authority the correct date is 1153.

In that year Tirlo O'Brien, son of Dermot, and nephew of the late king Murta, having been driven from Munster by his brother Tiege, came into Ulster to seek the aid of the monarch, who led an army towards the south, to reinstate him, and encamped at Ardnurcher in Meath.

Tiege, who marched to oppose him, was aided by Tirlo O'Conor, who, since the death of Murta O'Brien, was supreme in Munster as well as in Connaught, for by taking advantage of the jealousy which had arisen between the two great tribes of Munster—the Dal Cassians (*i*) led by the O'Briens, and Eugenians by the M'Carthys—he had so weakened their power and gained such command and influence over them that in 1151, when he made his submission to Murkertac, he, for a time, assumed the sovereignty of the province. In the following year, however, he divided the country between M'Carthy of Desmond or South Munster; and Tirlo and Tiege O'Brien, who reigned over Thomond or North Munster.

The latter now marched to Magh Cisi, near Rahin, in the north of the present King's County, where he awaited the arrival of O'Conor, but before he could effect a juncture Murkertac by a rapid movement with two battalions of picked men fell upon him and cut his army to pieces.

O'Conor retreated by the ford of Athlone into Connaught and while his son Roderick or Rory with

a part of his army was preparing to encamp Murkertac came upon him suddenly and put him to flight with great loss, Murtagh, his brother, Donal, son of Cathal, and others being among the slain.

Tirlo O'Brien's men were then billeted on Meath, Breffny, and Ulster, he himself being taken ill and unable to proceed into Munster for some weeks, when he recovered half the kingdom.

O'Conor, however, had lorded it over the Munstermen too long to surrender without a struggle; and some months later he sent a fleet under O'Dowda to Tir Conal and Inishowen, where he fell in with Mac Scellig,—a Gall Gaedhal—Murkertac's admiral, with a fleet from the Hebrides and Man and the "Coast of Scotland in general."

After a desperate battle, lasting from early morning till "dewy eve" the Connaughtmen compelled Mac Scellig to sheer off, leaving his teeth behind him, as the Annalists are careful to inform us.

Meanwhile Murkertac, marching into Connaught, demolished the fort of Dunamon on the river Suck, and spoiled the neighbouring territory. Directing his course across the ford of Inis-Sruthra into Breffny he compelled the men of that country to acknowledge Teernan O'Rorke, whom he had formerly banished as being an enemy of O'Conor.

From Breffny he marched through Meath to Dublin, where the Danes acknowledged him as

their king, and having given them 1200 cows as "wages" he returned home.

On hearing of these disturbances it was that the English monarch, Henry II., thinking no doubt he could make an easy conquest, proposed invading Ireland, when, in 1154, he obtained, that grant—"on the strength of false statements," as O'Neill (Donal) tells Pope John XXII. in his memorial—from his countryman Adrian, which has been made the subject of so much discussion. Had Henry landed in Ireland at this time we can imagine what a different reception he would have met with from that which he received in 1172 from the luckless Rory O'Conor, who always proved himself a bad general.

In 1155, on the death of Malachy, son of Murchad O'Melaghlin, Murkertac gave the kingdom of Meath to Donogh, son of Donal O'Melaghlin, and gave full restitution to the men of that kingdom for all his former depredations.

In the following year O'Conor died in the 68th year of his age and 50th of his reign, as King of Connaught. He was married to Murkertac's aunt, Dervorgill,—daughter of King Donal,—who died at Armagh "on her pilgrimage" in 1151. By her he was father of Hugh, Donal, and Cathal. O'Conor (Tirlo) was succeeded by his son and heir Roderick, who, like himself, proved particularly troublesome to Murkertac.

In 1157 he (Murkertac), was present with his princes, nobles, and the Archbishop of Armagh, the Papal Legate, the Bishop of Lismore, and seventeen other prelates, at the consecration of the abbey church of Mellifont, founded by St. Malachy and endowed by O'Carrol, the Prince of Oriel. After the consecration the question of dealing with the Prince of Meath was discussed; for Donogh, who had been set up by the Monarch, in 1155, had shown himself a bad man. He was accordingly excommunicated by the clergy, deposed and banished by Murkertac, who gave the kingdom to his brother Dermot.

On this occasion Murkertac gave a townland called Finnavar-na-ninghean, on the south side of the Boyne opposite the river Mattock, with 140 oxen and 60 ounces of gold "to God and the Monastery of Mellifont"[1], which was supplied with monks brought from Clairvaux.

Mellifont was the parent house of the Cistercian Order in this country. The site was chosen by St. Malachy in compliance with the instructions given him by St. Bernard, the plan of whose abbey was followed in the erection of the buildings. At the left side of the chancel, close to the high altar, the grave of the erring Dervorgill, who was a munificent benefactor, is pointed out. In 1566 the extensive possessions, comprising 5 water-mills,

[1] *Miscellany Irish Archæological Society.*

80 messuages and 3,200 acres, besides the tithes of various rectories, were granted by Queen Elizabeth to Sir Edward Moore, a soldier of fortune, whose descendants continued to reside in the Abbey till 1720, when they went to reside at Monasterevan Abbey founded by O'Dempsey for Cistercians in 1189. Not much of the former buildings now remain to be seen. When Archdall, the compiler of *Monasticon Hibernicum*, saw them as late as 1786, he speaks of the elegant window over the high altar, and three smaller windows on each side, of similar design. Painting in variegated colour was made use of to decorate the church, which was 180 feet in length. The entire area covered with buildings was fully an English acre. On a hill outside of the Monastery is a small chapel said to have been founded by St. Bernard himself.

In this year Murkertac at the head of his troops marched into Leinster and suppressed a rising against Dermot M'Murrogh, to whom the Princes of Offaly, Leix, and Ossory refused obedience. Having received hostages from Dermot he entered Munster and deposed Tirlo O'Brien, dividing the country between Cormac M'Carthy, whom he made King of Desmond, and Conor, son of Donal O'Brien, who was set up as King of Thomond.

Tirlo fled to Limerick, which was besieged by Murkertac, who compelled the Danes to banish him from among them.

Traversing Tipperary, he burned Roscrea and sent a party ahead under O'Cahan to waste Siol Anmchada—the O'Madden's country—in Connaught —where they were cut off by the Connaughtmen.

In the meantime, O'Conor, on the invitation of the Cinel Conal, who had revolted, invaded Tyrone and burned the fortress of Iniseanaigh, destroyed its orchard and wasted the country as far as Coolkeenaght in Londonderry.

Emboldened by this, he soon after, accompanied by O'Brien, again proceeded to invade Ulster, in the hope of dividing the sovereignty with Murkertac, who, after chastising the Cinel Conal, marched against him, and at Ardee, in Oriel—and in the now Co. Louth—utterly routed him with the loss of many of his chiefs, including Donal O'Flaherty, Prince of West Connaught; Gilchreest M'Dermott, Chief of Moylurg, and others. He then turned into Connaught and razed the forts of Dun More, Dun Cairidh, and Dun na nGall, returning with countless spoils. This settled Rory, who, in 1161 made his submission and gave four hostages, when he received the kingship of all Connaught.

O'Gormly (Donal) and the Cinel Main with O'Criochan and the Hy Fiacra of Ardstraw—descendants of Fiacra Tort, son of Colla Uais—having joined the Connacians on the above occasion, were attacked by the Lord of Tealach Oge—Murkertac O'Neill—at Magh Luadhat, thought to be Maghera-

cregan, near Newtown Stewart, Barony of Omagh, and severely punished; but Murkertac, on retiring from the field, was undeservedly slain by his own kinsman, Lochlain Mac Lochlain, who, however, was immediately cut down by O'Neill's son Hugh.

This Murkertac O'Neill, surnamed of Moylinny —a plain in Dal Araidhe extending from Lough Neagh to near Carrickfergus—was, as mentioned in a previous chapter, the son of Tiege of the Glen, son of Conor of the Wood, son of Flaherty, whose father Donal was the son and heir of Hugh Atlaman, the last chief and king of Ulster of his line (p. 341).

None of these chiefs of Tullahoge appear to have accomplished anything worthy of record, as their names do not appear in the Annals, which can only be accounted for by the fact that they were left minors on occasions when the chieftainship fell vacant between 1064-83, and 1121-42, when Murkertac the monarch was restored—after having been deposed by O'Gormly—by the Cinel Conal and his kinsman, the Lord of Tullahoge, who, in the circumstances, waived his own claims, providing doubtless that he or his family should have their turn. His disinterestedness on this occasion is evidently alluded to in the record of his death when it is said that he was undeservedly slain by a Mac Lochlain.

Murkertac's father, or grandfather, Conor, whose mother appears to have been an O'Brien, succeeded

Kennedy O'Brien about the year 1100. Kennedy's brother Conor is the last chief of Tullahoge whose death is noticed by the Annalists.

Tullahoge, or Tealach Oge, *i.e.*, the Hill of the Youths, three miles south of Cookstown, was inhabited by the inaugurators of the Princes of Aileach—the O'Hagans, Chiefs of Cinel Fergusa and "Lawgivers of Tullahoge," as they are called in the Annals, or Chief Brehons of Cinel Eoghan. This family, at present represented by Lord O'Hagan, derived from Maine, son of Nial of the Nine Hostages.

The old fort of Tullahoge still remains on top of the hill where the inauguration ceremony took place; and from time immemorial a yearly gathering of young people was held there down to fifty or sixty years ago.[1] To the east of the Hill a short distance away is a large circular encampment surrounded by a deep trench, within which is said to have stood the residence of O'Hagan.

Murkertac O'Neill was succeeded as Lord of Tullahoge by his son and heir, Hugh, surnamed the "Lazy Youth," who succeeded Mac Lochlain in the sovereignty of Ulster.

After the affair at Magh Luadhat where O'Neill fell, O'Gormly was driven from the chieftainship of the Cinel Main and was subsequently beheaded by the monarch's orders.

[1] Joyce's *Irish Names.*

Being now at peace with the provincial kings and his tributary princes, he directed his energies to erecting the church of the Bishop of Cinel Eoghan in Derry, which had been destroyed by fire some years before.

Derry was raised to the rank of an episcopal See, in a synod held in Meath in 1158, when Flaherty O'Brolchain,—a descendant of Sweeny the Famous, —was appointed its first Bishop, and when he set about erecting his cathedral.

Murkertac now took the building in hands himself; and in 1162 cleared a site by demolishing over 80 houses adjoining the old church. Forty days afterwards "the top stone of that great church, wherein there are 90 feet in length, was completed."

This was a "great" church at that time, for the ancient Irish churches were almost invariably of small size, their greatest length rarely exceeding eighty feet, and being usually not more than sixty. One example only is known of a church of greater length, namely, the great Church or Cathedral of Armagh, which was originally erected of the length of one hundred and forty feet.

In their general form they preserved very nearly that of the Roman Basilica. No churches appear to have been anciently erected in this country, either of the circular, the octagonal, or the cross form, as in Italy or Greece.

The uniformity of plan and size which usually characterizes the early churches of the Irish, Petrie (*Round Towers of Ireland*) thinks, originated in the spirit of their faith, or a veneration for some model given to them by their first teachers; for that the earliest Christian churches on the Continent were like these, small and unadorned, there is no reason to doubt, and the oldest churches still remaining in Greece are exactly similar to our own.

When St. Malachy, Archbishop of Armagh (1134-9) began to build a large church of stone at Bangor, like those that he had seen on the Continent, it is said that the natives were all astonished; and one, bolder than the rest, said to him: "What has come over you, good man, to introduce such a building? We are Scots, not Gauls, and want no such novelties. How do you think you can find the means or live long enough to finish it?"

Derry was completed and consecrated in 1164, on which occasion Flaherty, the Bishop, who is highly eulogised by the Annalists for his wisdom and goodness, was presented by the clergy of Ireland with a bishop's chair. He was also Abbot of St. Columba's Monastery, and superior of all the Columban houses within his See.

In 1151, when collecting funds for repairing his Monastery, he received from the Cinel Eoghan: a horse from every chief; a cow from every two

biatachs; the same from every three freeholders, and every four villeins or bond-tenants. From Murkertac himself he received twenty cows with a gold ring of five ounces and his charger and battle dress. The latter, which it is thought was taken to pieces and converted into vestments and altar decorations, included his diadem of gold and silver; his coat of mail; his torque, or collar of gold; his gold brooches; gold-hilted sword; his embossed shield and his battle-spears, with their rings of gold. This we learn from the description of the battle-dress of Conn in Chapter I.

On visiting Ulidia in 1153 he received: a horse from every chief; a sheep from every hearth, and a screabhall or screpall and five cows from M'Dunlevy, and an ounce of gold from his wife. From the Ossorians in 1161 instead of 140 oxen he accepted 420 ounces of pure silver. In ancient Ireland gold and silver were told out by weight, commonly in the form of rings, bracelets, or other ornaments which to facilitate exchange were always made of definite weights,[1] as in England. Thus Turner, in his *History of the Anglo-Saxons*, tells us that when a Danish bard composed a poem for King Ethelred he received as a reward a gold ring of seven ounces; and when the same bard sang one of his compositions for an Irish prince he offered him a reward of two ships, a very appropriate present for a Dane, one

[1] Joyce's *Soc. Hist.*

would think; but he preferred gold rings, swords, or clothes.

The ox or cow, which was a very general standard of value, not only in Ireland but all over the civilized world, was considered equal in value to an ounce of gold.[1]

Coins were not much in use as a medium of exchange. The principal coins in circulation were the crosog, which was stamped with the figure of a cross; the pinginn and the screpall, both of silver, specimens of which are to be seen in the Museum. No coin with the image or inscription of any of the early Irish Kings has as yet been discovered. The Irish Princes coined their own money down to a very late period, as in the 15th century one of the Acts passed by the Parliament of the Pale concerned the coins of O'Reilly of Breffny. Some silver specimens of the coins of the Princes of Leix and Offaly, preserved in Trinity College Museum, are described in the *Trans. R.I.A.*, Vol. I., A.D. 1787; *see* also Simon's *Essays on Irish Coins*, and Lindsay's *Irish Coinage*. To proceed

About this time (1164) the Ulidians began to show signs of disaffection; and in 1165 broke out in rebellion, when under Eochy M'Dunlevy, their chief, they raided Tyrone and slew many of the Cinel Eoghan. On this Murkertac, the monarch,

[1] *Idem.*

entered Ulidia, which he wasted with fire and sword, and compelled Eochy to seek safety in flight.

Gelasius the Archbishop of Armagh, however, interposed, and at his request and that of Donogh O'Carrol, the Prince of Oriel, Eochy was pardoned and restored. The peace was ratified under the Staff of Jesus and in presence of the Archbishop and all his clergy, and the Ulidians gave their pledges to the monarch "through the might of his regal power" and there were likewise given to him many treasures as well as the sword of the Earl, and there was given a townland to the clergy of Saball (Saul) "by reason of the prosperity of his reign."

The Ulidians, ever inclined to rebellion, were closely watched by Murkertac, who was now in a rather critical position by reason of the fact that in putting forward his son Nial as Tanist in opposition to Hugh O'Neill in 1163, he had lost the support of the great majority of his clansmen, Hugh being the popular candidate; besides O'Conor was again beginning to give trouble.

He was thus in no mood to look lightly on another rebellion; and in 1166 when the Prince of Ulidia gave cause for fresh suspicion he, according to the practice of the time, had him seized and blinded.

He doubtless believed that in acting thus he was quite justified; but the Cinel—like the Annalists—believed otherwise; and so strongly did they feel

in the matter that they turned completely against him, and there and then called upon him to abdicate

This he refused to do, whereupon, according to the *Annals of Ulster*, they called in the aid of O'Carrol, (*j*) Prince of Oriel, who, with an army of 9,000 men composed of those of Connaught and Oriel, came into Tir Eoghan to attack him "by direction of the Cinel Eoghan themselves in consequence of O'Lochlain, Arch-king of Ireland, having been abandoned by them, so that O'Lochlain with a small party of the Cinel Eoghan of Tealach Oge, marched to deliver an assault upon them at Fidh-o-nEchtach. (*k*). And even these very men (his own near kinsmen) abandoned him so there fell in that place Muirchertach, son of Nial O'Lochlain, Arch-king of Ireland. And he was the Augustus of all the North-west of Europe for valour and championship; and thirteen of the Cinel Eoghan were killed there. A great marvel and wonderful deed was done then, to wit, the King of Ireland to fall without battle and without contest."

Such was the tragic and unmerited death of the last and not least worthy of the Hy Nial Kings of Ireland. Of these twenty-eight represented the Northern Hy Nials—eighteen of the house of O'Neill, or race of Eoghan, and ten of the race of Conal Gulban.

The Southern Hy Nials, represented by the race

of Hugh Slain and his brother Colman, counted seventeen kings—ten of the race of Hugh Slain; and seven of the race of his brother Colman, ancestor of the Clan Colman, or O'Melaghlins.

The O'Briens count but one supreme king—Brian Boru; and the O'Conors reckon Roderick O'Conor, Murkertac's successor in the monarchy. His authority, like that of Murkertac himself—who was interred in Armagh—and his grandfather Donal being acknowledged by the whole of Ireland, the struggles for supremacy which now ensued between the two great families in Ulster leaving him without a rival, and the English without a serious opponent.

NOTES.

(*a*) Gilla Mac Liag or Gelasius, formerly Abbot of Derry, was appointed Archbishop in 1139 by St. Malachy, his predecessor. He died in 1173.

(*b*) Breffney, held by the O'Rorkes and O'Reillys, included the Counties Cavan and Leitrim and part of Longford.

(*c*) Erther *alias* Oirther and Airther, signifying Oriental and Eastern, was so called because of its situation in the east of Oriel. It is now included in the Baronies of Orior in Armagh. The O'Hanlons were Chiefs of this territory.

(*d*) This O'Kane, according to M'Firbis, was the son of Randal, son of Imar, son of Gilchreest, son of Conkina, son of Dermod, son of Casey, son of Cahan (*a quo* O'Cahan) who flourished early in the tenth century.

(*e*) O'Cairredh was a descendant of Nial Caille and up to the twelfth century was one of those eligible to succeed to the Chieftainship of Aileach, as in 1095 the Annalists record the death of Murkertac O'Cairre, Steward or Lord of Clan Aengus (in the Barony of Clogher) and heir of Aileach. In 1185 Gilchreest M'Cawell, Chief of Cinel Farry and chief adviser of all the north of Ireland was also Lord of Clans Aengus, Dubhinreacht (mentioned in the last chapter) Fogarty, Hy Kennoda and Clan Colla, all in the Barony of Clogher in Tyrone except the latter two, which were in Fermanagh adjoining.—O'Donovan.

(*f*) Cumaighe O'Flainn or Cumee O'Flynn, Lord of Hy Tuirtre and Firlee (for which see Chapter II.) derived from Fiachra toirt, son of Colla Uais, who was also the progenitor of the Hy Fiachra of Ardstraw. Inrachtach, the eleventh in descent from Fiachra, was the common ancestor of O'Flynn and O'Donnellan, who was sometime Chief of the territory.—See O'Hart for "Flinn." Cumee was slain by the English in 1194.

(*g*) Hugh the "Great Magennis," mentioned above, according to O'Donovan was Hugh Reamhair, or the Corpulent, son of Flaherty, son of Acholy, son of Ængus, son of Acholy son of Hugh, son of Ængus *a quo* Mac Aengusa, anglicised Magennis and Guinness. Lords Ardilaun and Iveagh claim to be of this Sept, whose territory in later times included the Baronies of Upper and Lower Iveagh in County Down.

(*h*) The Mac Cartans of Kinel Fagarty or Kinelarty, now the Baronies of Kinelarty and Dufferin in Down, like the Magenniss, O'Loingsighs, and O'Lawlors, derived from Calvagh, the last monarch of Ireland of the line of Ir. From Fagarty,

the sixth in descent from him, they took their tribe-name.—See O'Hart, who makes the Mac Cartans and Mac Artans two different families.

(*i*) The Dal Cassians were descendants of Cormac Cas son of Olioll Olum and the Eugenians, descendants of his brother Eoghan More.—See Chapter I.

(*j*) This Donogh, Prince of Oriel, now Counties Fermanagh, Monaghan, Armagh and Louth, was slain in 1168. His family traced their descent to Colla Mean. The last Prince of this line was blinded by the English in 1193 and afterwards hanged, when the O'Heighnighs or O'Heynys, who were of the same descent and Chiefs of Fermanagh, succeeded.

(*k*) According to the *Four Masters* he fell at Leter Luin, now Newtown Hamilton, near Orior in Oriel, with O'Gillalaine. O'Hamill and M'Gillamartin, Chief of Cinel Farry.

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